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THE GREAT HOUSE.

A STORY OF QUIET TIMES (1845-6)

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CHAPTER XVIII.

CHERBULIEZ opens one of his stories with the remark that if the law of probabilities ruled, the hero and heroine would never have met, seeing that the one lived in Venice and the other seldom left Paris. That in spite of this they fell in with one another was enough to suggest to the lady that Destiny was at work to unite them.

He put into words a thought which has entertained millions of lovers. If in face of the odds of three hundred and sixty-four to one Phyllis shares her birthday with Corydon, if Frederica sprains her ankle and the ready arm belongs to a Frederic, if Mademoiselle has a *grain de beauté* on the right ear, and Monsieur a plain mole on the left—here is at once matter for reverie, and the heart is given almost before the hands have met.

This was the fourth occasion on which Audley had come to Mary's rescue, and, sensible as she was, she was too thoroughly woman to be proof against the suggestion. On three of the four occasions the odds had been against his appearance. Yet he had come. To-day in particular, as if no pain that threatened her could be indifferent to him, as if no trouble approached her but touched a nerve in him, he had risen from the very ground to help and sustain her.

Could the coldest decline to feel interest in one so strangely linked with her by fortune? Could the most prudent in such a case abstain from day dreams, in which love and service, devotion and constancy, played their parts?

Sic itur ad astra! So men and women begin to love.

She spent the morning between the room in which John Audley was making a slow recovery, and the deserted library which already wore a cold and unused appearance. In the one and the other alike she felt a restlessness and a disturbance which she was fain to set down to yesterday's alarm. In the library the old interests invited her in vain. Do what she would, she could not keep her mind off the appointment before her. Her eyes grew dreamy, her thoughts strayed, her colour came and went. At one moment she would plunge into a thousand attentions to her uncle, at another she opened books only to close them. She looked at the clock—surely the hands were not moving! She looked again—it could not be as late as that! The truth was that Mary was not in love, but she was ready to be in love. She was glad and sorry, grave and gay, without reason; like a stream that dances over the shallows, and rippling and twinkling goes its way through the sunshine, knowing nothing of the deep pool that awaits it.

Presently, acting upon some impulse, she opened a drawer in one of the tables. It contained a portrait in crayons of Peter Basset, which John Audley had shown her. She took out the sketch and set it against a book where the light fell upon it, and she examined it. At first with a smile—that he should have been so mad as to think what he had thought! And then with a softer look. How hard she had been to him! How unfeeling! Nay, how cruel!

She sat for a long time looking at the portrait. But in fact she had forgotten that it was before her, until the clock, striking the half-hour before noon, surprised her. Then she thrust the portrait back into its drawer, and went with a composed face to put on her hat.

The past summer had been one of the wettest ever known, for rain had fallen on five days out of seven. But to-day it was fine, and as Mary descended the road that led from the house towards Riddelsley, a road open to the vale on one side and flanked on the other by a rising slope covered with brushwood, a watery sun was shining. Its rays, aided by the clearness of the air, brought out the colours of stubble and field, flood and coppice, that lay below. And men looking up from toil or pleasure, leaning on spades or pausing before they crossed a stile, saw the Gatehouse transformed to a fairy lodge, grey, clear-cut, glittering, breaking the line of forest trees—saw it as if it had stood in another world.

Mary looked back, looked forward, admired, descended. She had

made up her mind that Lord Audley would meet her at a turn near the foot of the hill, where a Cross had once stood, and where the crumbling base and moss-clothed steps still bade travellers rest and be thankful.

He was there; and Mary owned the attraction of the big smiling face and the burly figure, that in a rough, caped riding-coat still kept an air of fashion. He on his side saw coming to meet him, through the pale sunshine, not as yesterday an Atalanta, but a cool Dian, with her hands in a large muff.

'You bring a good report, I hope?' he cried before they met.

'Very good,' Mary replied, sparkling a little as she looked at him—was not the sun shining? 'My uncle is much better this morning. Dr. Pepper says that it was mainly exertion acting on a weak heart. He expects him to be downstairs in a week and to be himself in a fortnight. But he will have to be more careful in future.'

'That is good!' he replied heartily.

'He says, too, that if you had not acted so promptly, my uncle must have died.'

'Well, he was pretty far gone, I must say.'

'So, as he will not thank you himself, you must let me thank you.' And Mary held out the hand she had hitherto kept in her muff. She was determined not to be a prude.

He pressed it discreetly. 'I am glad,' he said. 'Very glad. Perhaps after this he may think better of me.'

She laughed. 'I don't think that there is a chance of it,' she said.

'No? Well, I suppose it was foolish, but do you know, I did hope that this might bring us together.'

'You may dismiss it,' she answered, smiling.

'Ah!' he said. 'Then tell me this. How in the world did he come to be there? Without a hat? Without a coat? And so far from the house?'

Mary hesitated. He had turned, they were walking side by side. 'I am not sure that I ought to tell you,' she said. 'What I know I gathered from a word that Mr. Audley let fall when he was rambling. He seems to have had some instinct, some feeling that you were there and to have been forced to learn if it was so.'

'But forced? By what?' Lord Audley asked. 'I don't understand.'

'I don't understand either,' Mary answered.

'He could not know that we were there?'

'But he seems to have known.'

'Strange,' he murmured. 'Does he often stray away like that?'

'He does, sometimes,' she admitted reluctantly.

'Ah!' Audley was silent a moment. Then 'Well, I am glad he is better,' he said in the tone of one who dismisses a subject. 'Let us talk of something else—ourselves. Are you aware, Miss Audley, that this is the fourth time that I have come to your rescue?'

'I know that it is the fourth time that you have been very useful,' she admitted. She wished that she had been able to control her colour, but though he spoke playfully there was meaning in his voice.

'I, too, have a second sense it seems,' he said, almost purring as he looked at her. 'Did you by any chance think of me, when you missed your uncle?'

'Not for a moment,' she retorted.

'Perhaps—you thought of Mr. Basset?'

'No, nor of Mr. Basset. Had he been at the Gatehouse I might have. But he is away.'

'Away, is he? Oh!' He looked at her with a whimsical smile. 'Do you know that when he met us the other evening I thought that he was a little out of temper? It was not a continuance of that which took him away, I suppose?'

Mary would have given the world to show an unmoved face at that moment. But she could not. Nor could she feel as angry as she wished. 'I thought we were going to talk of ourselves,' she said.

'I thought that we were talking of you.'

On that, 'I am afraid that I must be going back,' she said. And she stopped.

'But I am going back with you!'

'Are you? Well, you may come as far as the Cross.'

'Oh, hang the Cross!' he answered with a masterfulness of which Mary owned the charm, while she rebelled against it. 'I shall come as far as I like! And hang Basset too—if he makes you unhappy!' He laughed. 'We'll talk of—what shall we talk of, Mary? Why, we are cousins—does not that entitle me to call you "Mary"?'

'I would rather you did not,' she said, and this time there was no lack of firmness in her tone. She remembered what Basset had said about her name and—and for the moment the other's airiness displeased her.

'But we are cousins.'

'Then you can call me cousin,' she answered.

He laughed. 'Beaten again!' he said.

'And I can call you cousin,' she said sedately. 'Indeed, I am going to treat you as a cousin. I want you, if not to do, to think of doing something for me. I don't know,' she continued nervously, 'whether I am asking more than I ought—if so you must forgive me. But it is not for myself.'

'You frighten me!' he said. 'What is it?'

'It's about Mr. Colet,' she said. 'The curate whom you helped us to save from those men at Brown Heath. He has been shamefully treated. What they did to him might be forgiven—they knew no better. But I hear that because he preaches what is not to everybody's taste, but what thousands and thousands are saying, he is to lose his curacy. And that is his livelihood. It seems most wicked to me, because I am told that no one else will employ him. And what is he to do? He has no friends——'

'He has one eloquent friend.'

'Don't laugh at me!' she cried.

'I am not laughing,' he answered. He was, in fact, wondering how he should deal with this—this fad of hers. A little, too, he was wondering what it meant. It could not be that she was in love with Colet. Absurd! He recalled the look of the man. 'I am not laughing,' he repeated more slowly. 'But what do you want me to do?'

'To use your influence for him,' Mary explained, 'either with the rector to keep him, or with some one else to employ him.'

'I see.'

'He only did what he thought was his duty. And because he did it, is he to pay with all he has in the world?'

'It seems a hard case.'

'It is more. it is an abominable injustice!' she cried.

'Yes,' he said slowly. 'It seems so. It certainly seems hard. But let me—don't be angry with me if I put another side.' He spoke with careful moderation. 'It is my experience that good, easy men, such as I take the rector of Riddsley to be, rarely do a thing which seems cruel, without reason. A clergyman, for instance; he has generally thought out more clearly than you or I what it is right to say in the pulpit; how far it is lawful, and then again how far it is wise to deal with matters of debate. He has considered how far a pronouncement may offend some, and so may render his office less welcome to them. That is one consideration. Probably, too, he has considered that a statement, if events falsify it, will injure

him with his poorer parishioners who look up to him as wiser than themselves. Well, when such a man has laid down a rule and finds a younger clergyman bent upon transgressing it, is it unreasonable if he puts his foot down ?

‘I had not looked at it in that way.’

‘And that, perhaps, is not all,’ he resumed. ‘You know that a thing may be true, but that it is not always wise to proclaim it. It may be too strong meat. It may be true, for instance, that corn-dealers make an unfair profit out of the poor ; but it is not a truth that you would tell a hungry crowd outside the corn-dealer’s shop on a Saturday night.’

‘No,’ Mary allowed reluctantly. ‘Perhaps not.’

‘And again—I have nothing to say against Colet. It is enough for me that he is a friend of yours—’

‘I have a reason for being interested in him. I am sure that if you heard him——’

‘I might be carried away ? Precisely. But is it not possible that he has seen much of one side of this question, much of the poverty for which a cure is sought, without being for that reason fitted to decide what the cure should be ?’

Mary nodded. ‘Have you formed any opinion yourself ?’ she asked.

But he was too prudent to enter on a discussion. He saw that so far he had impressed her with what he had said, and he was not going to risk the advantage he had gained. ‘No,’ he said, ‘I am weighing the matter at this moment. We are on the verge of a crisis on the Corn Laws, and it is my duty to consider the question carefully. I am doing so. I have hitherto been a believer in the tax. I may change my views, but I shall not do so hastily. As for your friend, I will consider what can be done, but I fear that he has been imprudent.’

‘Sometimes,’ she ventured with a smile, ‘imprudence is a virtue.’

‘And its own reward !’ he retorted. They had passed the Cross, they were by this time high on the hill, with one accord they came to a stand. ‘However, I will think it over,’ he continued. ‘I will think it over, and what a cousin may, a cousin shall.’

‘A cousin may much when he is Lord Audley,’ she said.

‘A poor man in a fine coat ! A butterfly in an east wind.’ He removed his curly-brimmed hat and stood gazing over the prospect—the wide valley that far and near gleamed with many a sheet of flood-water. ‘Have you ever thought, Mary, what that means ?’ he continued with feeling. ‘To be the shadow

of a name! A ghost of the past! To have for home a ruin, and for lands a few poor farms—in place of all that we can see from here! For all this was once ours. To live a poor man among the rich! To have nothing but——’

‘Opportunities!’ she answered, her voice betraying how deeply she was moved—for she too was an Audley. ‘For, with all said and done, you start where others end. You have no need to wait for a hearing. Doors stand open to you that others must open. Your name is a passport—is there a Stafford man who does not thrill to it? Surely these things are something. Surely they are much?’

‘You would make me think so!’ he exclaimed.

‘Believe me, they are.’

‘They would be if I had your enthusiasm!’ he answered, moved by her words. ‘And, by Jove,’ he continued, gazing with admiration at her glowing face, ‘if I had you by me to spur me on there’s no knowing, Mary, what I might not try! And what I might not do!’

Womanlike, she would evade the crisis which she had provoked. ‘Or fail to do!’ she replied. ‘Perhaps the most worthy would be left undone. But I must go now,’ she continued. ‘I have to give my uncle his medicine. I fear I am late already.’

‘When shall I see you again?’ he asked, trying to detain her.

‘Some day, I have no doubt. But good-bye now! And don’t forget Mr. Colet! Good-bye!’

He stood awhile looking after her, then he turned and went down the hill. By the time he was at the place where he had met her he was glad that she had broken off the interview.

‘I might have said too much,’ he reflected. ‘She’s handsome enough to turn any man’s head! And not so cold as she looks, by Gad! And she spells safety. But there’s no hurry—and she’s inclined to be kind, or I am mistaken! That clown, Basset, has got his dismissal, I fancy, and there’s no one else!’

Presently his thoughts took another turn. ‘What maggots women get into their heads!’ he muttered. ‘That pestilent Colet—I’m glad the rector acted on my hint. But there it is; when a woman meddles with politics she’s game for the first spouter she comes across! Fine eyes, too, and the Audley blood! With a little drilling she would hold her own anywhere.’

Altogether, he found the walk to the place where he had left his

carriage pleasant enough and his thoughts satisfactory. With Mary and safety on one side, and Lady Adela and a plum on the other—it would be odd if he did not bring his wares to a tolerable market.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CORN LAW CRISIS.

HE had been right in his forecast when he told Mary that a political crisis was at hand. That which had been long whispered, was beginning to be openly stated in club and market-place. The Corn Laws, the support of the country, the mainstay, as so many thought, of the Constitution, were in danger; and behind closed doors, while England listened without, the doctors were met to decide their fate.

Potatoes! The word flew from mouth to mouth that wet autumn, from town to country, from village to village. Potatoes! The thing seemed incredible. That the lordly Corn Laws, the bulwark of the landed interest, the prop of agriculture, that had withstood all attacks for two generations, and maintained themselves alike against high prices and the Corn Law League—that these should go down because a vulgar root like the potato had failed in Ireland—it was a thing passing belief. It couldn't be. With the Conservatives in power, it seemed impossible.

Yet it was certain that the position was grave, if not hopeless. Never since the Reform Bill had there been such meetings of the Cabinet, so frequent, so secret. And strange things were said. Some who had supported Peel, yet did not trust him, maintained that this was the natural sequel of his measures, the point to which he had been moving through all the years of his Ministry. Potatoes—bah! Others who still supported him, yet did not trust him, brooded nervously over his action twenty years before, when he had first resisted and then accepted the Catholic claims. Tories and Conservatives alike, wondered what they were there to conserve, if such things were in the wind; and protested, but with growing misgiving, that the thing could not be. While those among them who had seats to save and majorities to guard, met one another with gloomy looks, whispered together in corners and privately asked themselves what they would do—if he did. Happy in these circumstances were those who like Mottisfont, the father, were ready to retire; and still happier those who like Mottisfont,

the son, knew the wishes of their constituents and could sing 'John Barleycorn, my Jo, John,' with no fear of being jilted.

Their anxieties—they were politicians—were mainly personal—and selfish. But there were some, simple people like Mr. Stubbs at Riddsley, who really believed, when these rumours reached them, that the foundations of things were breaking up, and that the world in which they had lived was sinking under their feet. Already in fancy they saw the glare of furnaces fall across the peaceful fields. Already they heard the tall mill jar and quiver where the cosy homestead and the full stackyard sprawled. They saw a weakly race, slaves to the factory bell, overrun the land where the ploughman still whistled at his work and his wife suckled healthy babes. To these men, if the rumours they heard were true, if Peel had indeed sold the pass, it meant the loss of all; it meant the victory of coal and cotton, the ruling of 'all after the Manchester pattern, the reign of Cash, the Lord, and ten per cent. his profit—it meant the end of the old England they had loved.

Not that Stubbs said this at Riddsley, or anything like it. He smiled and kept silence, as became a man who knew much and was set above common rumour. The landlord of the Audley Arms, the corndealer, the brewer, the saddler went away from him with their fears allayed merely by the way in which he shrugged his shoulders. At the farmers' ordinary he had never been more cheerful; he gave the toast of 'Horn and Corn, gentlemen! And when potatoes take their place you may come and tell me!'—he gave it so heartily that the farmers went home, market-peart and rejoicing, laughed at their doubting neighbours, and quoted a hundred things that Lawyer Stubbs had not said.

But a day or two later the lawyer sustained an unpleasant shock. He had been little moved by Lord John's manifesto—the declaration in which the little Whig Leader, seeing that the Government hesitated, had plumped for total repeal. That was in the common course of things. It had heartened him, if anything. It was natural. It would bring the Tories into line and put an end to trimming. But this—this which confronted him one morning when he opened his London paper was different. He read it, he held his breath, he stood aghast a long minute, he swore. After a few minutes he took his hat and the newspaper, and went round to the house in which Lord Audley lived when he was at Riddsley.

It was a handsome Georgian house, built of brick with stone

facings, and partly covered with ivy. A wide smooth lawn divided it from the road. The occupant was a curate's widow who lived there with her two sisters and eked out their joint means by letting the first floor to her landlord. For 'The Butterflies' was Audley property, and the clergyman's widow was held to derogate in no way by an arrangement which differed widely from a common letting of lodgings. Mrs. Jenkinson was stout, short, and fussy, her sisters were thin, short, and precise, but all of them overflowed with words as kindly as their deeds. Good Mrs. Jenkinson, in fact, who never spoke of his lordship behind his back but with distant respect, sometimes forgot in his presence that he was anything but a 'dear young man'; and when he had a cold, would prescribe a posset or a warming-pan with an insistence which at times amused and more often bored him.

Stubbs found his lordship just risen from a late lunch, and in his excitement, the lawyer forgot his manners. 'By G—d, my lord!' he cried, 'he's resigned.'

Audley looked at him with displeasure. 'Who's resigned?' he asked coldly.

'Peel!'

Against that news the young man was not proof. He caught the infection. 'Impossible!' he said, rising to his feet.

'It's true! It's in the *Morning Post*, my lord! He saw the Queen yesterday. She's sending for Lord John. It's black treachery! It's the blackest of treachery! With a majority in the House, with the peers in his pocket, the country quiet, trade improving, everything in his favour, he's sold us—sold us to Cobden on some d—d pretext of famine in Ireland!'

Audley did not answer at once. He stood deep in thought, his eyes on the floor, his hands in his pockets. At length, 'I don't follow it,' he said. 'How is Russell, who is in a minority, to carry repeal?'

'Peel's promised his support!' Stubbs cried. Like most honest men, he was nothing if not thorough. 'You may depend upon it, my lord; he has! He won't deceive me again. I know him through and through, now. He'll take with him Graham and Gladstone and Herbert, his old tail, Radicals at heart every man of them, and he the biggest!'

'Well,' Audley said slowly, 'he might have done one thing worse. He might have stayed in and passed repeal himself!'

'Good G—d!' the lawyer cried, 'Judas wouldn't have done

that! All he could do, he has done. He has let in corn from Canada, cattle from Heaven knows where, he has let in wool. All that he has done. But even he has a limit, my lord! Even he! The man who was returned to support the Corn Laws—to repeal them. Impossible!’

‘Well?’ Audley said. ‘There’ll be an election, I suppose?’

‘The sooner the better,’ Stubbs answered vengefully. ‘And we shall see what the country thinks of this. In Riddsley we’ve been ready for weeks—as you know, my lord. But a General Election? Gad! I only hope they will put some one up here, and we will give them such a beating as they’ve never had!’

Audley pondered. ‘I suppose Riddsley is safe,’ he said.

‘As safe as Burton Bridge!’

The other rattled the money in his pocket. ‘As long as you give them a lead, Stubbs, I suppose?’ he said. ‘But if you went over? What then?’

Stubbs opened his eyes. ‘Went over?’ he ejaculated.

‘Oh, I don’t mean,’ my lord said airily, ‘that you’re not as staunch as Burton Bridge. But supposing you took the other side—it would make a difference, I suppose?’

‘Not a jot!’ the lawyer answered sturdily.

‘Not even if the two Mottisfontes sided with Peel?’

‘If they did the old gentleman would never see Westminster again,’ Stubbs cried, ‘nor the young one go there!’

‘Or,’ Audley continued, setting his shoulders against the mantelshelf, and smiling, ‘suppose I did? If the Beaudelays interest were cast for repeal? What then?’

‘What then? You’ll pardon me, my lord, if I am frank,’ Stubbs answered. ‘Then the Beaudelays influence, that has held the borough time out of mind, that returned two members before ’32, and has returned one since—there’d be an end of it! It would snap like a rotten stick. The truth is we hold the borough while we go with the stream. In fair weather when it is a question of twenty votes one way or the other, we carry it. And you’ve the credit, my lord.’

Audley moved his shoulders restlessly. ‘It’s all I get by it,’ he said. ‘If I could turn the credit into a snug place of two thousand a year, Stubbs—it would be another thing. Do you know,’ he continued, ‘I’ve often wondered why you feel so strongly on the corn taxes?’

‘You asked me that once before, my lord,’ the agent answered

slowly. 'All that I can say is that more things than one go to it. Perhaps the best answer I can make is this, that like your lordship's influence in the borough, it's part sentiment and part tradition. I have a picture in my mind—it's a picture of an old homestead that my grandfather lived in and died in, my lord, and that I visited when I was a boy. That would be about the middle nineties; the French war going, corn high, cattle high, a good horse in the gig and old ale for all comers. There was comfort inside and plenty without; comfort in the great kitchen, with its floor as clean as a pink, and greened in squares with bay leaves, its dresser bright with pewter, its mantel with Toby jugs! There was wealth in the stackyard, with the poultry strutting and scratching, and more again in the byres knee-deep in straw, and the big barn where they flailed the wheat! And there were men and maids more than on two farms to-day, some in the house, some in thatched cottages with a run on the common and wood for the getting. I remember, as if they were yesterday, hot summer afternoons when there'd be a stillness on the farm and all drowsed together, the bees, and the calves, and the old sheep-dog, and the only sounds that broke the silence were the cluck of a hen, or the clank of pattens on the dairy-floor, while the sun fell hot on the orchard, where a little boy hunted for damsons! That's what I often see, my lord,' Stubbs continued stoutly. 'And may Peel protect me, if I ever raise a finger to set mill and furnace, devil's dust and slave-grown cotton, in place of that!'

My lord concealed a yawn. 'Very interesting, Stubbs,' he said. 'Quite a picture! Peace and plenty and old ale! And little Jack Horner sitting in a corner! No, don't go yet, man. I want you.' He made a sign to Stubbs to sit down, and settling his shoulders more firmly against the mantel-shelf, he thrust his hands deeper into his trouser-pockets. 'I'm not easy in my mind about John Audley,' he said. 'I'm not sure that he has not found something.'

Stubbs stared. 'There's nothing to find,' he said. 'Nothing, my lord! You may be sure of it.'

'He goes there.'

'It's a craze.'

'It's a confoundedly unpleasant one!'

'But harmless, my lord. Really harmless.'

The younger man's impatience darkened his face, but he controlled it—a sure sign that he was in earnest. 'Tell me this,' he

said. 'What evidence would upset us? You told me once that the claim could be reopened on fresh evidence. On what evidence?'

'I regard the case as closed,' Stubbs answered stubbornly. 'But if you put the question'—he seemed to reflect—'the point at issue, on which the whole turned, was the legitimacy of your great-grandfather, my lord, Peter Paravicini Audley's son. Mr. John's great-grandfather was Peter Paravicini's younger brother. The other side alleged, but could not produce, a family agreement admitting that the son was illegitimate. Such an agreement, if Peter Paravicini was a party to it, if it was proved, and came from the proper custody, would be an awkward document and might let in the next brother's descendants—that's Mr. John. But in my opinion, its existence is a fairy story, and in its absence, the entry in the register stands good.'

'But such a document would be fatal?'

'If it fulfilled the conditions it would be serious,' the lawyer admitted. 'But it does not exist,' he added confidently.

'And yet—I'm not comfortable, Stubbs,' Audley rejoined. 'I can't get John Audley's face out of my mind. If ever man looked as if he had his enemy by the throat, he looked it; a d—d disinheriting face I thought it! I don't mind telling you,' the speaker continued, some disorder in his own looks, 'that I awoke at three o'clock this morning, and I saw him as clearly as I see you now: and at that moment I wouldn't have given a thousand pounds for my chance of being Lord Audley this time two years!'

'Liver!' said Stubbs, unmoved. 'Liver, my lord, asking your pardon! Nothing else—and the small hours. I've felt like that myself. Still, if you are really uneasy there is always a way out, though it may be impertinent of me to mention it.'

'The old way?'

'You might marry Miss Audley. A handsome young lady, if I may presume to say so, of your own blood and name, and no disparagement except in fortune. After Mr. John, she is the next heir, and the match once made would checkmate any action on his part.'

'I am afraid I could not afford such a marriage,' Audley said coldly. 'But I am obliged to you. As for this news'—he flicked the newspaper that lay on the table—'it may be true or it may not. If it is true, it will alter many things. We shall see. If you hear anything fresh let me know.'

Stubbs said that he would and took his leave, wondering a little, but having weightier things on his mind. He sought his home by back ways, for he did not wish to meet Dr. Pepper or Bagenal the brewer, or even the saddler, until he had considered what face he would put on Peel's latest move. He felt that his reputation for knowledge and sagacity was at stake.

Meanwhile his employer, left alone, fell to considering, not what face he should put upon the matter, but how he might at this crisis turn the matter and the borough to the best account. Certainly Stubbs was discouraging, but Stubbs was a fool. It was all very well for him; he drew his wages either way. But a man of the world did not cling to the credit of owning a borough for the mere name of the thing. If he were sensible he looked to get something more from it than that. And it was upon occasions such as this that the something more was to be had by those who knew how to go about the business.

Here, in fact, was the moment, if he was the man.

CHAPTER XX.

PETER'S RETURN.

NOT a word or hint of John Audley's illness had come to Basset's ears. At the time of the alarm he had been in London, and it was not until some days later that he took his seat in the morning train to return to Stafford. On his way to town, and for some days after his arrival, he had been buoyed up by plans, nebulous indeed, but sufficient. He came back low in his mind and in poor spirits. The hopes, if not the aspirations, which Colet's enthusiasm had generated in him had died down, and the visit to Francis Place had done nothing to revive them.

Some greatness in the man, a largeness of ideas, an echo of the revolutionary days when the sanest saw visions, Basset was forced to own. But the two stood too far apart, the inspired tailor and the country squire, for sympathy. They were divided by too wide a gulf of breeding and prejudice to come together. Basset was not even a Radical, and his desire to improve things, and to better the world, fell very far short of the passion of humanity which possessed the aged Republican—the man who for half a century had been so forward in all their movements that his fellows christened him the '*Old Postilion*.'

Nothing but disappointment, therefore, had come of the meeting. The two had parted with a little contempt on the one side, a sense of failure on the other. If a man could serve his neighbours only in fellowship with such, if the cause which for a few hours had promised to fill the void left by an unhappy love, could be supported only by men who held such opinions, then Basset felt that the thing was not for him. For six or seven days he went up and down London at odds with himself and his kind, and ever striving to solve a puzzle, the answer to which evaded him. Was the hope that he might find a mission and found a purpose on Colet's lines, was it just the desire to set the world right that seized on young men fresh from college? And if this were so, if this were all, what was he to do? Whither was he to turn? How was he going to piece together the life which Mary had broken? How was he going to arrange his future so that some thread of purpose might run through it, so that something of effort might still link together the long bed-roll of years?

He found no answer to the riddle. And it was in a gloomy, unsettled mood, ill-content with himself and the world, that he took his seat in the train. Alas, he could not refrain from recalling the May morning on which he had taken his seat in the same train with Mary. How ill had he then appreciated her company, how little had he understood, how little had he prized his good fortune! He who was then free to listen to her voice, to meet her eyes, to follow the changes of her mood from grave to gay! To be to her—what he could! And that for hours, for days, for weeks!

He swore under his breath and sat back in the shadow of the corner. And a man who entered late, and saw that he kept his eyes shut, fancied that he was ill; and when he muttered a word under his breath, asked him if he spoke.

'No,' Basset replied curtly. And that he might be alone with his thoughts he took up a newspaper and held it before him. But not a word did he read. After a long interval he looked over the journal and met the other's eyes.

'Surprising news this,' the stranger said. He had the look of a soldier, and the bronzed face of one who had lived under warm skies.

Basset murmured that it was.

'The Whigs have a fine opportunity,' the other pursued. 'But I am not sure that they will use it.'

'You are a Whig, perhaps?'

The stranger smiled. 'No,' he replied. 'I am not. I have lived so long abroad that I belong to no party. I am an Englishman.'

'Ah?' Basset rejoined, curiosity beginning to stir in him. 'That's rather a fine idea.'

'Apparently it's a novel one. But it seems natural to me. I have lived for fifteen years in India and I have lost touch with the cant of parties. Out there, we do honestly try to rule for the good of the people; their prosperity is our interest. Here, during the few weeks I have spent in England I see things done, not because they are good, but because they suit a party, or provide a cry, or put the other side in a quandary.'

'There's a good deal of that, I suppose.'

'Still,' the stranger continued, 'I know a great man, and I know a fine thing when I see them. And I fancy that I see them here!' He tapped his paper.

'Has Lord John formed his ministry, then?'

'No, I am not sure that he will. I am not thinking of him, I am thinking of Peel.'

'Oh! Of Peel?'

'He has done a fine thing! As every man does who puts what is right before what is easy. May I tell you a story of myself?' the Indian continued. 'Some years ago in the Afghan war I was unlucky enough to command a small frontier post. My garrison consisted of two companies and six or seven European officers. The day came when I had to choose between two courses. I must either hold my ground until our people advanced, or I must evacuate the post, which had a certain importance—and fall back into safety. The men never dreamed of retreating. The officers were confident that we could hold out. But we were barely supplied for forty days, and in my judgment no reinforcement was possible under seventy. I made my choice, breached the place, and retired. But I tell you, sir, that the days of that retreat, with sullen faces about me, and hardly a man in my company who did not think me a poltroon, were the bitterest of my life. I knew that if the big-wigs agreed with them I was a ruined man, and after ten years I should go home disgraced. Fortunately the General saw it as I saw it, and all was well. But'—he looked at Basset with a wry smile—'it was a march of ten days to the base; and to-day the sullen looks of those men come back to me in my dreams.'

'And you think,' Basset said—the other's story had won his respect—'that Peel has found himself in such a position?'

'To compare great issues with small, I do. I suspect that he has gone through an agony—that is hardly too strong a word—such as I went through. My impression is that when he came into office he was in advance of his party. He saw that the distress in the country called for measures which his followers would accept from no one else. He believed that he could carry them with him. Perhaps, even then, he held a repeal of the corn laws possible in some remote future; perhaps he did not, I don't know. For suddenly there came on him the fear of this Irish famine—and forced his hand.'

'But don't you think,' Basset asked, 'that the alarm is premature?' A dozen times he had heard the famine called a sham, a bite, anything but a reality.

'You have never seen a famine,' the other replied gravely. 'You have never had to face the impossibility of creating food where it does not exist, or of bringing it from a distance when there are no roads. I have had that experience. I have seen people die of starvation by hundreds, women, children, babes, when I could do nothing because steps had not been taken in time. God forbid that that should happen in Ireland! If the fear does not outrun the dearth, God help the poor! Now I am told that Peel witnessed a famine in Ireland about '17 or '18, and knows what it is.'

'You have had interesting experiences?' Basset said.

'The experience of every Indian officer. But the burden which rests on us makes us alive to the difficulties of a statesman's position. I see Peel forced—forced suddenly, perhaps, to make a choice; to decide whether he shall do what is right or what is consistent. He must betray his friends, or he must betray his country. And the agony of the decision is the greater if he has it burnt in on his memory that he did this thing once before; that once before he turned his back on his party—and that all the world knows it!'

'I see.'

'If a man in that position puts self, consistency, reputation all behind him—believe me, he is doing a fine thing.'

Basset assented. 'But you speak,' he added, 'as if Sir Robert were going to do the thing himself—instead of merely standing aside for others to do it.'

'A distinction without much difference,' the other rejoined. 'Possibly it will turn out that he is the only man who can do it. If so, he will have a hard row to hoe. He will need the help of every moderate man in the country, if he is not to be beaten. For

whether he succeeds or fails, depends not upon the fanatics, but upon the moderate men. I don't know what your opinions are ?'

'Well,' Basset said frankly, 'I am not much of a party-man myself. I am inclined to agree with you, so far.'

'Then if you have any influence, use it. Unfortunately, I am out of it for family reasons.'

Basset looked at the stranger. 'You are not by any chance Colonel Mottisfont ?' he said.

'I am. You know my brother ? He is member for Riddelsley.'

'Yes. My name is Basset.'

'Of Blore ? Indeed. I knew your father. Well, I have not cast my seed on stony ground. Though you are stony enough about Wootton-under-Weaver.'

'True, worse luck. Your brother is retiring, I hear ?'

'Yes, he has just horse sense, has Jack. He won't vote against Peel. His lad has less and will take his place and vote old Tory. But there, I mustn't abuse the family.'

They had still half an hour to spend together before Basset got out at Stafford. He had time to discover that the soldier was faced by a problem not unlike his own. His service over, he had to consider what he would do. 'All I know,' the Colonel said breezily, 'is that I won't do nothing. Some take to preaching, others to Bath, but neither will suit me. But I'll not drift. I kept from brandy pawnee out there, and I am going to keep from drift here. For you, you're a young man, Basset, and a hundred things are open to you. I am over the top of the hill. But I'll do something.'

'You have done something to-day,' Basset said. 'You have done me good.'

Later he had time to think it over during the long journey from Stafford to Blore. He drove by twisting country roads, under the grey walls of Chartley, by Uttoxeter and Rochester. Thence he toiled uphill to the sterile Derbyshire border, the retreat of old families and old houses. He began to think that he had gained some ideas with which he could sympathise, ideas which were at one with Mary Audley's burning desire to help, while they did not clash with old prejudices. If he threw himself into Peel's cause, he would indeed be seen askance by many. He would have to put himself forward after a fashion that gave him the goose-flesh when he thought of it. A landowner, he would have to go against the land. But he would not feel, in his darker moods, that he was

the dupe of cranks and fanatics. He saw Peel as Mottisfont had pictured him, as a man putting all behind him except the right ; and his heart warmed to the picture. Many would fall away, few would be staunch ; from this ship, as from every sinking ship, the rats would flee. But so much the stronger was the call.

The result was that the Peter Basset who descended at the porch of the old gabled house, that sat low and faced east in the valley under Weaver, was a more hopeful man than he who had entered the train at Euston. A purpose, a plan—he had gained these, and the hope that springs from them.

He had barely doffed his driving-coat, however, before his thoughts were swept in another direction. On the hall table lay two letters. He took up one. It was from Colet and written in deep dejection. 'The barber was a Tory and had given him short notice. Feeling ran high in the town, and other lodgings were not to be had. The Bishop had supported the Rector's action, and he saw no immediate prospect of further work.' He did not ask for shelter, but it was plain that he was at his wit's end, and more than a little surprised by the storm which he had raised.

Basset threw down the letter. 'He shall come here,' he thought. 'What is it to me whom he marries ?' Many solitary hours spent in the streets of London had gone some way towards widening Peter's outlook.

He took up the second letter. It was from John Audley, and before he had read three lines, he rang the bell and ordered that the post-chaise which had brought him from Stafford should be kept : he would want it in the morning. John Audley wrote that he had been very ill ; he was still in bed. He must see Basset. The matter was urgent, he had something to tell him. He hinted that if he did not come quickly it might be too late.

Basset could not refuse to go ; summoned after this fashion, he must go. But he tried to believe that he was not glad to go. He tried to believe that the excitement with which he looked forward to the journey had to do with his uncle. It was in vain ; he knew that he tricked himself. Or if he did not know this then, his eyes were opened next day, when, after walking up the hill to spare the horses—and a little because he shrank at the last from the meeting—he came in sight of the Gatehouse, and saw Mary Audley standing in the doorway. The longing that gripped him then, the emotion that unmanned him, told him all. It was of Mary he had been thinking, towards Mary he had been travelling,

of her work it was that the miles had seemed leagues! He was not cured. He was not in the way to be cured. He was the same love-sick fool whom she had driven from her with contumely an age—it seemed an age, ago.

He bent his head as he approached, that she might not see his face. His knees shook and a tremor ran through him. Why had he come back? Why had he come back to face this anguish?

Then he mastered himself; indeed he took himself the more strongly in hand for the knowledge he had gained. When they met at the door it was Mary, not he, whose colour came and went; who spoke awkwardly, and rushed into needless explanations. The man listened with a stony face, and said little, almost nothing.

After the first awkward greeting, 'Your room has been airing,' she continued, avoiding his eyes. 'My uncle has been expecting you for some days. He has asked for you again and again.'

He explained that he had been in London—hence the delay; and, further, that he must return to Blore that day. She felt that she was the cause of this, and she coloured painfully. But he seemed to be indifferent. He noticed a trifling change in the hall, asked a question or two about his uncle's state, and inquired what had caused his sudden illness.

She told the story, giving details. He nodded. 'Yes, I have seen him in a similar attack,' he said. 'But he gets older. I am afraid it alarmed you?'

On that she forced herself to describe Lord Audley's part in the matter—and Mr. Stubbs's; and was conscious that she was dragging in Mr. Stubbs more often than was necessary. Basset listened politely, remarked that it was fortunate that Audley had been on the spot, added that he was sure that everything had been done that was right.

When he had gone upstairs to see John Audley she escaped to her room. Her cheeks were burning, and she could have cried. Basset's coldness, his distance, the complete change in his manner all hurt her more than she could say. They brought home to her, painfully home to her what she had done. She had been foolish enough to fling away the friend, when she need only have discarded the lover!

But she must face it out now. The thing was done, and she must put up with it. And by and by, fearing that Basset might suppose that she avoided him, she came down and waited for him in the deserted library. She had waited some minutes, moving restlessly

to and fro and wishing the ordeal of luncheon were over, when her eyes fell on the door of the staircase that led up to her uncle's room. It was ajar.

She stared at it, for she knew that she had closed it after Basset had gone up. Now it was ajar. She reflected. The house was still, she could hear no one moving. She went out quickly, crossed the hall, looked into the dining-room. Toft was not there, nor was he in the pantry. She returned to the library, and went softly up the stairs.

So softly that she surprised the man before he could raise his head from the keyhole. He saw that he was detected, and for an instant he scowled at her in the half-light of the narrow passage, uncertain what to do. Mary beckoned to him, and went down before him to the library.

There she turned on him. 'Shut the door,' she said. 'You were listening! Don't deny it. You have acted disgracefully, and it will be my duty to tell Mr. Audley what has happened.'

The man, sallow with fear, tried to brave it out.

'You will only make mischief, if you do, Miss,' he said sullenly. 'You'll come near to killing the master.'

'Very good!' Mary said, quivering with indignation. 'Then instead of telling Mr. Audley I shall tell Mr. Basset. It will be for him to decide whether Mr. Audley shall know. Go now.'

But Toft held his ground. 'You'll be doing a bad day's work, Miss,' he said darkly. 'I want to run straight.' He raised his hand to his forehead, which was wet with perspiration. 'I swear I do! I want to run straight.'

'Straight!' Mary cried in scorn. 'And you listen at doors!'

The man made a last desperate attempt to soften her. 'For God's sake, be warned, Miss,' he cried. 'Don't drive me. If you knew as much as I do——'

'I should not listen to learn the rest!' replied Mary without pity. 'That is enough. Please to see that lunch is ready.' She pointed to the door. She was not an Audley for nothing.

Toft gave way then and went, and she remained alone, perplexed as well as angry. Mrs. Toft and Etruria were good simple folk; she liked them. But Toft had puzzled her from the first. He was so silent, so secretive, he was for ever appearing without warning and vanishing without noise. She had often suspected that he spied on his master.

But she had never caught him in the act, and the certainty that he did so, filled her with dismay. It was fortunate, she thought, that Basset was there, and that she could consult him. And the instant that he appeared, forgetting their quarrel and the strained relations between them, she poured out her story. Toft was ungrateful, treacherous, a danger! With Mr. Audley so helpless, the house so lonely, it frightened her.

It was only when she had run on for some time that Basset's air of detachment struck her. He listened, with his back to the fire, and his eyes bent on the floor, but he did not speak until she had told her story, and expressed her misgivings.

When he did, 'I am not surprised,' he said. 'I've suspected this for some time. But I don't know that anything can be done.'

'Do you mean that—you would do nothing?'

'The truth is,' he answered, 'Toft is pretty far in his master's confidence. And what he does not know he wishes to know. When he knows it, he will find it a mare's nest. The truth—as I see it at any rate—is that your uncle is possessed by a craze. He wants me to help him in it. I cannot. I have told him so, firmly and finally, to-day. Well, I suspect that he will now turn to Toft. I hope not, but he may, and if we report the man's misconduct, it will only precipitate matters and hasten an understanding. That is the position, and if I were you, I should let the matter rest.'

'You mean that?' she exclaimed.

'I do.'

'But—I have spoken to Toft!' Her eyes were bright with anger.

He kept his on the floor. It was only by maintaining the distance between them that he could hope to hide what he felt. 'Still I would let him be,' he repeated. 'I do not think that Toft is dangerous. He has surprised one half of a secret, and he wishes to learn the other half. That is all.'

'And I am to take no notice?'

'I believe that that will be your wisest course.'

She was shocked, and she was still more hurt. He pushed her aside, he pushed her out of his confidence, out of his uncle's confidence! His manner, his indifference, his stolidity showed that she had not only killed his feeling at a stroke, but that he now disliked her.

And still she protested. 'But I must tell my uncle!' she cried.

'I think I would not,' he repeated. 'But there'—he paused and

looked at his watch—'I am afraid that if you are going to give me lunch I must sit down. I've a long journey before me.'

Then she saw that no more could be said, and with an effort she repressed her feelings. 'Yes,' she said, 'I was forgetting. You must be hungry.'

She led the way to the dining-room, and sat down with him, Toft waiting on them with the impassive ease of the trained man. While they ate, Basset talked of indifferent things, of his journey from town, of the roads, of London, of Colonel Mottisfont—an interesting man whom he had met in the train. And as he talked, and she made lifeless answers, her indignation cooled, and her heart sank.

She could have cried, indeed. She had lost her friend. He was gone to an immense distance. He was willing to leave her to deal with her troubles and difficulties, it might be, with her dangers. In killing his love with cruel words—and how often had she repented, not of the thing, but of the manner!—she had killed every feeling, every liking, that he had entertained for her.

It was clear that this was so, for to the last he maintained his coldness and indifference. When he was gone, when the sound of the chaise-wheels had died in the distance, she felt more lonely than she had ever felt in her life. In her Paris days she had had no reason to blame herself, and all the unturned leaves of life awaited her. Now she had turned over one page, and marred it, she had won a friend and lost him, she had spoiled the picture, which she had not wished to keep!

Her uncle lay upstairs, ready to bear, but hardly welcoming her company. He had his secrets, and she stood outside them. She sat below, enclosed in and menaced by the silence of the house. Yet it was not fear that she felt so much as a sadness, a great depression, a grey despondency. She craved something, she did not know what. She only knew that she was alone—and sad.

She tried to fight against the feeling. She tried to read, to work, even to interest herself in Toft and his mystery. She failed. And at last she gave up the attempt and with her elbows on her knees and her eyes on the fire she fell to musing, the ticking of the tall clock and the fall of the embers the only sounds that broke the stillness of the shadowy room.

(To be continued.)

TO KIEL IN THE 'HERCULES.'¹

BY LEWIS R. FREEMAN.

II. ACROSS THE SANDS TO NORDERNEY.

THE names of 'Norderney' and 'Borkum' on the list of seaplane stations to be inspected seemed to strike a familiar chord of memory, but it was not until I chanced upon a dog-eared copy of 'The Riddle of the Sands' on a table in the 'Commission Room' of the *Hercules* that it dawned upon me where I had heard them before. There was no time at the moment to re-turn the pages of this most consummately told yarn of its kind ever written, but, prompted by a happy inspiration, I slipped the grimy little volume into my pocket. And there, as the clattering special which was to take us to Norddeich, *en route* to Norderney, turned off from the Bremen main line a few miles outside of Wilhelmshaven, I found it again, just as the green, water-logged fields and bogs of the 'land of the seven *siels*' began to unroll in twin panoramas on either side. Opening the book at random somewhere toward the middle, my eye was drawn to a paragraph beginning near the top of the page facing a much-pencilled chart.

' . . . The mainland is that district of Prussia that is known as East Friesland. [I remembered now that it was "Carruthers," writing in the *Dulcibella*, off Wangerogg, who was describing the "lay of the land."] It is a short, flat-topped peninsula, bounded on the west by the Ems estuary and beyond that by Holland, and on the east by the Jade estuary; a low-lying country, containing great tracts of marsh, and few towns of any size; on the north side none. Seven islands lie off the coast. All, except Borkum, which is round, are attenuated strips, slightly crescent-shaped, rarely more than a mile broad, and tapering at the ends; in length averaging about six miles, from Norderney and Juist, which are seven and nine respectively, to little Baltrum, which is only two and a half.'

As I turned the book sideways to look at the chart, the whole fascinating story came back with a rush. What man who has ever knocked about in small boats, tramped roads and poked

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about generally in places where he had no business to poke could forget it? The East Friesland peninsula, with its 'seven little rivers,' and 'seven channels,' and 'seven islands,' was the 'take off' for the German army which was to cross the North Sea in barges to land on the sands of 'The Wash' for the invasion of England. And this very line over which our rickety two-car special was clinkety-clanking—I wished that 'Carruthers' could have seen what a pitiful little old single-track it had become—was the 'strategic trunk' over which the invading cohorts were to be shunted in their thousands to the waiting deep-sea-going barges in the canalised *siels*. There was Esens, which was to have been the 'nodal centre' of the great embarkation, and scarcely had I located it on the map before its tall spire was stabbing the north-western skyline as we drew in to the station.

A raw-boned, red-faced girl, her astonishingly powerful frame clad in a greasy man's overall, lowered the barrier at the high-road crossing, the same barrier, I reflected, which had held up 'Carruthers,' Von Brunning, and the two 'cloaked gentlemen' on the night of the great adventure. Four 'land girls' in close-fitting brown corduroys, with great baskets of red cabbages on their shoulders, were just trudging off down the road to Dornum, the very 'cobbled causeway flanked with ditches and willows and running cheek by jowl with the railway track' which 'Carruthers' had followed by midnight, with 'fleecy clouds and a half moon overhead,' in search of the Berser Tief. There was even a string of mighty barges towing down the narrow canal of the 'Tief' when we crossed its rattling bridge a few minutes later. And just as 'Carruthers' described, the road and railway clung closely together all the way to Dornum, and about half-way were joined by a third companion in the shape of a puny stream, the Neues Tief. 'Wriggling and doubling like an eel, choked with sedges and reeds,' it had no more pretensions to being navigable now than then. It still 'looped away into the fens out of sight, to reappear again close to Dornum in a more dignified guise,' and it still skirted the town to the east, where there was a tow-path and a piled wharf. The only change I was able to note in the momentary halt of the train was that the 'red brick building with the look of a warehouse, roofless as yet and with workmen on the scaffolds,' had now been covered with red tile and filled with red cabbages.

It was at Dornum that 'Carruthers' (who was masquerading

as a German sailor on his way to visit a sister living on Baltrum) fell in at a primitive *Gasthaus* with an ex-crimp, drunken with much *schnapps*, who insisted on accompanying him on a detour to Dornumersiel, where he had planned to do a hasty bit of spying. From the right-hand window I caught brief glimpse of the ribbon of the coastward road, down the length of which the oddly-assorted pair—the Foreign Office *précis* writer and the one-time ‘shanghai’ artist—had stumbled arm-in-arm, treating each other in every gin-shop on the way.

‘Carruthers’ detour to the coast carried him out of sight of the railway, so that he missed the little red brick schoolhouse, close up by the track, where the buxom mistress had her whole brood of young Fritzes and Gretchens lined up along the fence of the right-of-way to wave and cheer our train as it passed. How she received word of the coming of the ‘Allied Special’ we could only conjecture, but it was probably through some Workmen’s and Soldiers’ Council friend in the railway service. But even so, as the schoolhouse was three miles from the nearest station and had nothing suggestive of a telephone line running to it, she must have had her *banzai* party standing by in readiness a good part of the forenoon session. Hurriedly dropping a window (they work rather hard on account of the stiffness of the thick paper strap), I was just able to gather that the burden of the greeting was ‘Good morning, good morning, sir!’ repeated many times in guttural chorus. If any of them were shouting ‘Welcome!’ as one or two of our party thought they heard, it escaped my ears. They did the thing so well one was sure it had been rehearsed, and wondered how long it had been since those same throaty trebles had been raised in the ‘Hymn of Hate.’ If ‘Carruthers’ spying visit to Dornumersiel resulted in anything more ‘revealing’ than the dig in the ribs one of the youngsters got from the mistress for (apparently) not cheering lustily enough, he neglected to set it down in his story. This little incident prepared us for much we were to see later in the way of German ‘conciliation’ methods.

‘Carruthers,’ when he returned to the railway again and took train at Hage, made the journey from the latter station to Norden in ten minutes. The fact that our special took twenty is sufficient commentary on the deterioration of German road beds and rolling stock. Norden, which is the junction point for Emden, to the south, and Norddeich, to the north, is a good sized town, and we

noticed here that the streets were beflagged and arched with evergreen as at Wilhelmshaven, doubtless in expectation of returning troops. While our engines were being changed, a couple of workmen, standing back in the depths of a tool house, kept waving their hands ingratiatingly every time the armed guard (who always paced up and down the platform while the train was at a station) turned his back. What they were driving at—unless co-operating with the children in the general 'conciliation' programme—we were not able to make out.

From Norden to Norddeich was a run of but three or four miles, but a bad road bed and a worse engine made the journey a tedious if fitting finale to our painful progress across the East Frisian peninsula. Halting but a few moments at the main station, the train was shunted to a spur which took it right out to the quay where the great dyke bent inward to form a narrow artificial harbour. A few steps across the slippery moss-covered stones where the falling tide had bared the sloping landing took us to where a small but powerfully-engined steam launch was waiting to convey the party to Norderney. Manned by naval ratings, it had the same aspect of neglect which characterised all of the warships we had visited. The men saluted smartly, however, and on our expressing a wish to remain in the open air in preference to the stuffy cabin, they tumbled below and brought up cushions and ranged them along the deck-house to sit upon. The Allied officers dangled their legs to port, the German officers to starboard, while the ex-sailor and the 'plain-clothes' detective from the Workmen's and Soldiers' Council disposed themselves authoritatively in the wheel-house.

A few minutes' run between heavy stone jetties brought us to the open sea, where the launch began threading a channel which seemed to be marked mostly by buoys, but here and there by close-set rows of saplings, now just beginning to show their scraggly tops above the falling water. It was the sight of these latter marks—so characteristic of these waters—that reminded me that we had at last come out into the real hunting-ground of the *Dulcibella*, where 'Davies' and 'Carruthers' had puzzled out the solution of 'The Riddle of the Sands.' Norderney and Juist and Borkum and the others of the 'seven islands' strung their attenuated lengths in a broken barrier to seaward, and between them and the mainland we were leaving astern stretched the amazing mazes of the sands, alternately bared and covered by the

ebb and flow of the tides. Two-thirds of the area, according to 'Carruthers,' were dry at low water, when the

'remaining third becomes a system of lagoons whose distribution is controlled by the natural drift of the North Sea as it forces its way through the intervals between the islands. Each of these intervals resembles the bar of a river, and is obstructed by dangerous banks over which the sea pours at every tide scooping out a deep pool. This fans out and ramifies to east and west as the pent-up current frees itself, encircles the islands and spreads over the intervening flats. But the further it penetrates the less scouring force it has, and as a result no island is girt completely by a low-water channel. About midway at the back of each of them is a "watershed," only covered for five or six hours out of the twelve. A boat, even of the lightest draught, navigating behind the islands, must choose its moment for passing these.'

'I trust we have "chosen *our* moment" carefully,' I said to myself after reading those lines and reflecting what a large part of their time the *Dulcibella*, *Kormoran*, and all the other craft in the 'Riddle' had spent careened upon sand-spits. To reassure myself, I leaned back and asked one of the German officers if boats didn't run aground pretty often on that run. 'Oh yes, most often,' was the reply, 'but only at low water or when the fog is very thick. With this much water, and when we can see as far as we can now'—there was about a quarter mile of visibility—'there is no danger. Our difficulty will come when we try to return this evening on the low water.'

It may have been my imagination, but I thought he put a shade more accent on that *try* than a real optimist would have done under similar circumstances. But then, I told myself, it was hardly a time when one could expect a German officer to be optimistic about anything.

Heading out through the well-marked channel of the *Buse Tief*, between the sands of the *Itzendorf Plate* to port and *Hohe Riff* to starboard, twenty minutes found the launch in the opener waters off the west end of Norderney where, with its light draught, it had no longer to thread the winding of the buoyed fairway. Standing on northward until the red roofs and white walls of the town sharpened into ghostly relief on the curtain of the mist, the course was altered five or six points to starboard, and we skirted a broad stretch of sandy beach, from the upper end of which the even slopes of concreted 'runs' were visible, leading back to where,

dimly outlined in their darker opacity, a long row of great hangars loomed fantastically beyond the dunes. Doubling a sharp spit, the launch nosed in and brought up alongside the landing of a slip notched out of the side of the little natural harbour.

The Commander of the station—a small man, but wiry and exceeding well set up—met us as we stepped off the launch. Then, and throughout the visit, his quiet dignity of manner and ready (but not too ready) courtesy struck a welcome mean between the incongruous blends of sullenness and subserviency we had encountered in meeting the officers in the German warships. He saluted each member of the party as he landed, but tactfully refrained from offering his hand to any but the attached German officers. It was this attitude on the part of the Commander, together with the uniformly courteous but uneffusive demeanour of the other officers with whom we were thrown in contact, that made the visit to Norderney perhaps the pleasantest of all the many inspections carried out in Germany.

Walking inland along a brick-paved road, we passed a large canteen or recreation club (with a crowd of curious but quite respectful men lined up along the verandah railings to watch us go by) before turning in to a fine new brick-and-tile building which appeared to be the officers' casino. Leaving our overcoats in the reception room, we joined the dozen or more officers awaiting us at the entrance and fared on by what had once been flower-bordered walks to the hangars. As we came out upon the 'tarmac'—here, as with all German seaplane and airship stations, the runs for the machines in front of the hangars are paved with concrete instead of the tarred macadam which is used so extensively in England and France—the men of the station were seen to be drawn up by companies, as for a review. Each company stood smartly to attention at the order of its officers as the party came abreast of it, and we—both Allied and German officers—saluted in return. As we passed on, each company in turn broke rank and quietly dispersed to barracks, their officers following on to join the party in the furthest hangar, where the inspection was to begin. The discipline appeared to be faultless, and it was soon evident that the men and their officers had arrived at some sort of a 'working understanding' to tide them over the period of inspection, if not longer.

The two representatives of the Workmen and Soldiers who had accompanied our party from Wilhelmshaven were allowed

to be present during the inspection, and with them two other 'white-banders' who appeared to have been elected to represent the men of the station. All other men had been cleared out of the sheds in conformity with the stipulations of the armistice. Some unauthorised individual—apparently a mechanic—who, half-way through the inspection, was noticed following the party, was summarily ordered out by the Commander. He obeyed somewhat sullenly, but though we subsequently saw him in gesticulative confab with some of his mates on the outside, he did not venture again into any of the hangars. That was the nearest approach to insubordination we saw in Norderney.

The officers of the station—now that we saw them, a score or more in number, all together—were a fine, business-like looking lot. All of them wore some kind of a decoration, most of them several, and among these were two or three of the highly prized '*Ordres pour le Mérite*.' As Norderney was the 'star' seaplane station, that body of keen-eyed, square-jawed young flying officers undoubtedly included the cleverest naval pilots at Germany's disposal. What their many decorations had been given for there was, of course, no way of learning; nor did we find out whether the presence of so many of them at the inspection was voluntary or by order. Though, like their Commander, quiet and reserved, they were invariably courteous and willing in doing anything to facilitate the tedious progress of inspection.

There was an amusing little incident which occurred during the course of inspection in connection with a very smart young German officer who, from the moment I first saw him at the door of the casino, I kept telling myself I had encountered somewhere before. For half an hour or more—while checking the names and numbers of the machines in my notebook as inspection was completed—my mind was running back through one German colony or foreign settlement after another, trying to find the scene into which that florid face (with its warm, wide-set eyes and its full, sensual mouth) fitted. Dar-es-Salaam, Windhoek, Tsingtau, Yap, Apia, Herbertshöhe—I scurried back through them all without uncovering a clue. Where else had I met Germans? The southern 'panhandle' of Brazil, the south of Chile, Bagdad—that was the first name to awaken a sense of 'nearness.' 'Bagdad, Bagdad Railway, Assur, Mosul,' I rambled on, and just as I began to recall that I had encountered Germans scattered all along the caravan route from the Tigris to Syria, the object of my interest turned

up those soulful eyes of his to look at one of the American officers clambering into the 'house' of the 'Giant' monoplane seaboard under inspection at the moment—and I had him.

'Aleppo!—"Du Bist wie Eine Blume!"' I chortled exultantly, my mind going back to a night in June 1912, when, the day after my arrival from the desert, the American Consul had taken me to a party at the Austrian Consulate in honour of someone or other who was about to depart for home—wherever that was. Young Herr X—— (I even recalled the name now) and his brother, both on the engineering staff of the Bagdad Railway, were among the guests, the former very smitten with a sloe-eyed sylph of a Greek Levantine, whose mother (so a friendly gossip told me) had been a dancer in a café chantant in Beirut before she married the Smyrna hairdresser who afterwards made a fortune buying liquorice root from the Arabs. The girl (there was no denying the lissome grace of her serpentine slenderness) was sipping her pink rose-leaf sherbet in a balcony above the open court, when Herr X—— had been asked to sing along towards midnight, and the fervid passion of his up-turned glances as he sung 'Du Bist wie Eine Blume' as an encore to 'Ich Liebe Dich' had made enough of an impression on my mind to need no more than the reminder vouchsafed me to recall it.

Evidently (perhaps because I had not furnished him with a similar reason) Herr Romeo did not trace any connection between my present well-rounded 'sea-faring' figure and the sun-dried, fever-wracked anatomy I had dragged into Aleppo in 1912, for I noted that his eyes had passed over me impersonally twice or thrice without a flicker of recognition. The explosiveness of my exultant chortle, however, must have assailed the ear of the German officer standing a couple of paces in front of me, for he turned round quickly and asked if I had spoken to him.

'No—er—not exactly,' I stammered, adding at the promptings of a sudden reckless impulse, 'but I would like to ask if you knew when Lieutenant X—— over there left the Bagdad Railway for the flying service.'

'He was at the head office in Frankfurt when the war began and joined shortly afterwards,' the young officer replied promptly, stepping back beside me. Then, as the somewhat surprising nature of the query burst upon him, a look of astonishment flushed his face and a pucker of suspicion drew his bushy brows together in a perturbed frown. 'But may I ask——' he began.

'And his brother who was with him in Aleppo—the one with the scar on his cheek and the top of one ear sliced off,' I pressed; 'where is he?'

'Died of fever in Nishbin,' again came the prompt answer. 'But' (blurring it out quickly) 'how do you know about them?'

Being human, and therefore weak, it was not in me to enlighten him with the truth, and to add that I was merely a second class Yankee hack writer, temporarily togged out in an R.N.V.R. uniform to regularise my position of 'Keeper of the Records' of the Allied Naval Armistice Commission. No, I couldn't do that. Indeed, everything considered, I am inclined to think that I rendered a better service to the Allied cause when I squared my shoulders importantly and delivered myself oracularly of 'It is our business to know' (impressive pause) 'all.'

My reward was worthy of the effort. 'Ach, it is but true,' sighed the young officer resignedly. 'The English Intelligence is wonderful, as we have too often found out.'

'It is not bad,' I admitted modestly, as I strolled over to make a note of the fact that the machine-gun mounting of one of the *Friedrichshafens* had not been removed.

I could see that my young friend was bursting to impart to Lieutenant X—the fact that he was a 'marked man,' but it was just as well that no opportunity offered in the course of the inspection. That the ominous news had been broken at luncheon, however, I felt certain from the fact that, when, missing X—from the group of officers who saluted us from the doorway of the casino on our departure, I cast a furtive glance at the upper windows, it surprised him in the act of withdrawing behind one of the lace curtains. I only hope he has nothing on his conscience in the way of hospital-bombings and the like. If he has, it can hardly have failed to occur to him that his name is inscribed on the Allied 'blacklist,' and that he will have to stand trial in due course.

It's a strange thing this cropping up of half-remembered faces in new surroundings. The very next day, in the course of the visit to the Zeppelin station at Nordholz—but I will not anticipate.

Under the terms of the armistice the Germans agreed to render all naval seaplanes unfit for use by removing their propellers, machine-guns and bomb-dropping equipment, and dismantling their wireless and ignition systems. To see that this was carried out on a single machine was not much of a task, but multiplied by

the several scores in such a station as Norderney, it became a formidable labour. To equalise the physical work, the sub-commission for seaplane stations arranged that the British and American officers included in it should take turn-and-turn about in active inspection and checking the result of the latter with the lists furnished in advance by the Germans. At Norderney the 'active service' side of the programme fell to the lot of the two American officers to carry out. The swift pace they set at the outset slowed down materially toward the finish, and it was a pair of very weary officers that dropped limply from the last two *Albatrosses* and sat down upon a pontoon to recover their breath. It was, I believe, Lieut.-Commander L—who, ruefully rubbing down a cramp which persisted in knotting his left calf, declared that he had just computed that his combined clamberings in the course of the inspection were equal to ascending and descending a mountain half a mile high.

Practically all of the machines at Norderney were of the tried and proven types—*Brandenburgs*, *Albatrosses*, *Friedrichshafens*, *Gothas*, &c.—already well known to the Allies. (It was not until the great experimental station at Warnemunde, in the Baltic, was visited a fortnight later that specimens of the latest types were revealed.) The Allied experts of the party were greatly impressed with the excellence of construction of all of the machines, none of them appearing to have suffered in the least as a consequence of a shortage of materials. The steel pontoons in particular—a branch of construction to which the Germans had given much attention, and with notable success—came in for especially favourable comment. (The Commander of the station, by the way, showed us one of these pontoons which he had had fitted with an engine and propeller and used in duck-shooting.) The general verdict seemed to be that the Germans had little to learn from anyone in the building of seaplanes, and that this was principally due to the fact that they had concentrated upon it for over-sea work, where the British had been going in more and more for swift 'carrier' ships launching aeroplanes. It was by aeroplanes launched from the 'carrier' *Furious* that the great Zeppelin station at Tondern was practically destroyed last summer, and there is no doubt that this kind of a combination can accomplish far more effective work—providing, of course, that the power using it has command of the sea—than anything that can be done by seaplanes. It was the fact that Germany did *not* have control of the sea, rather

than any lack of ingenuity or initiative, that pinned her to the seaplane, and, under the circumstances, it has to be admitted that she made very creditable use of the latter.

The one new type of machine at Norderney (although the existence of it had been known to the Allies for some time) was the 'giant' monoplane seaboat, quite the most remarkable machine of the kind in the world at the present time. Though its span of something like 120 feet is less than that of a number of great aeroplanes already in use, its huge breadth of wing gave it a plane area of enormous size. The boat itself was as large—and apparently as seaworthy—as a good-sized steam launch, and so roomy that one could almost stand erect inside of it. It quite dwarfed anything of the kind I had ever seen before. Nor was the boat, spacious as it was, the only closed-in space. Twenty feet or more above the deck of it, between the wings, was a large 'box' containing, among other things, a very elaborately equipped *sound-proof* wireless room. The technical instruments of control and navigation—especially the very compact 'Gyro' compasses—stirred the Allied experts to an admiration they found difficult to restrain.

One of the German officers who had accompanied us from Wilhelmshaven told me something of the history of this greatest of monoplanes. 'This flying boat,' he said, while we waited for the somewhat lengthy inspection to be completed, 'was the last great gift that Count Zeppelin' (he spoke the name with an awe that was almost adoration) 'gave to his country before he died. He was terribly disappointed by the failure of the Zeppelin airship as an instrument for bombing, and the last months of his life were spent in designing something to take its place. He realised that the size of the mark the airship offered to the constantly improving anti-aircraft artillery, together with the invention of the explosive bullet and the increasing speed and climbing power of aeroplanes, put an end for ever to the use of Zeppelins where they would be exposed to attack. He set about to design a heavier-than-air machine that would be powerful enough to carry a really great weight of bombs, and the "Giant" you see here is the result.

'As Count Zeppelin did not believe that it would ever be possible to land a machine of this weight and size on the earth, he made it a flying boat. But it was not intended for flights over water at all in the first place—that was to be simply for rising from and landing in. It was to be kept at one of our seaplane stations on

the Belgian coast, as near as possible to the Front, and from here it was to go for bombing flights behind the enemy lines. But before it was completed, experience had proved that it was quite practicable to land big machines on the earth, and so the "Giant" found itself superseded as a bomber. It was then that it was brought to the attention of the Naval Flying Service, and we, recognising in it the possibilities of an ideal machine for long distance reconnaissance, took it over and completed it. Now, although a few changes have been made in the direction of making it more of a "sea" machine, it does not differ greatly from the original designs of Count Zeppelin.'

As to how the machine had turned out in practice he was, naturally, rather non-committal. The monoplane, he thought, had the advantage over a biplane for sea use that its wings were much higher above the water, and therefore much less likely to get smashed up by heavy waves. He admitted that this machine had proved extremely difficult to fly—or rather to land—and that it had been employed exclusively for 'school' purposes, for the training of pilots to fly the others of the same type that had been building. Now that the war was over, he had some doubts as to whether these would ever be completed. 'We are having to modify so many of our plans, you see,' he remarked naïvely.

On the fuselage of several of the machines there were evidences that signs or marks had been scratched out and painted over, and I took it that the words or pictures so recently obliterated had probably been of a character calculated to be offensive to the visiting Allied officers. One little thing had been overlooked, however, or else left because it was in a corner somewhat removed from the ebb and flow of the tide of inspection. I discovered it while passing along to the machine shops in the rear of one of the hangars, and later contrived to manœuvre myself back to it for a confirmatory survey. It was nothing more or less than a map of the United States which some angry pilot had thoroughly *strafed* by stabbing with a pen-knife blade. I was not able to study it long enough to be sure just what the method of the madness was, but—from the fact that the environs of New York, Pittsburg, Philadelphia, and Detroit had been literally pecked to pieces—it seemed possible that it might have been an attack on the industrial centres—perhaps because they were turning out so much munitions for the Allies.

There were two other maps tucked up on the same wall. One

was of Africa, with the ex-German colonies coloured red, with lighter shaded areas overflowing from them on to British, Belgian, French and Portuguese possessions. This may have been (I have since thought) a copy of the famous map of 'Africa in 1920,' issued in Germany early in the war, but I had no time to puzzle out the considerable amount of explanatory lettering on it. So far as I could see, this map was unmarked, not even a black mourning border having been added.

The third map was of Asia, and a long, winding and apparently rather carefully made cut running from the north-west corner toward the centre completely defeated me to account for. The fact that it ran through Asia Minor, Northern Syria, and down into Mesopotamia seemed to point to some connection with the Bagdad Railway—perhaps a *strafe* at an enterprise which, first and last, had deflected uselessly so huge an amount of German money and material.

The inspection over and the terms of the armistice having been found most explicitly carried out, we returned to the reception room of the casino for lunch. Although the Commander protested that all arrangements had been made for serving us with *mittagessen*, our senior officer, acting under orders, replied that we had brought our own food and that this, with a pitcher of water, would be quite sufficient. The water was sent, and with it two beautiful long slender bottles of *Hock* which—as they were never opened—only served to accentuate the flatness of the former.

We heard the officers of the station trooping up the stairs as we unrolled our sandwiches, and just as we were pulling up around the table someone threw open a piano in the room above our heads and struck three ringing chords. 'Bang!'—interval—'Bang!'—interval—'Bang!' they crashed one after the other, and the throb of them set the windows rattling and the pictures (paintings of the station's fallen pilots) swaying on the wall.

'Prelude in G flat,' breathed Major N—tensely, as he waited with eye alight and ear acock for the next notes; 'my word, the chap's a master.'

But the next chord was never struck. Instead, there was a gruff order, the scrape of feet on the floor, and the slam of a closed piano, followed by the confused rumble of several angry voices speaking at the same time. Then silence.

'Looks like the majority of our hosts don't think "Inspection Day's" quite the proper occasion for tinkling Rachmaninoff on

the ivories,' observed Lieut.-Commander L——, U.S.N., after which he and Major N—— began discussing plans for educating the popular taste for 'good music' and the rest of us fell to on our sandwiches.

The fog—that all-pervading East Frisian fog—which had been thickening steadily during the inspection, settled down in a solid bank while we sat at lunch. With a scant dozen yards of visibility, the Commander rated the prospects of crossing to the mainland so unfavourable that he suggested our remaining for the night at one of the Norderney hotels still open, and going over to Borkum (which we were planning to reach by destroyer) the next morning by launch. It was the difficulty in securing a prompt confirmation of what would have been a time-saving change of schedule which led Captain H—— to reject the plan and decide in favour of making an attempt to reach Norddeich in, and in spite of, the fog. The Commander shook his head dubiously. 'My men who know the passage best have left the station,' he said; 'but I will do the best I can for you, and perhaps you will have luck.' He saw us off at the landing with the same quiet courtesy with which he had received us. He was a very likeable chap, that Commander; perhaps the one individual with whom we were thrown into intimate contact in the course of the whole visit to whom one would have thought of applying that term.

Noticing that the launch in which we were backing away from the landing was at least double the size of the one in which we had crossed, I asked one of the German officers if the greater draught of it was not likely to increase our chances of running aground.

'Of course,' he replied; 'but the larger cabin will also be much more comfortable if we have to wait for the next tide to get off.'

As the launch swung slowly round in the mud-and-sand stained welter of reversed screws, I bethought me of 'The Riddle' again, and fished it forth from my pocket. It was disappointing to leave without having had a glimpse of the town where 'Dollman' and his 'rose-cheeked' daughter Clare had lived, but the fog closed us round in a grey-walled cylinder scarcely more in diameter than the launch was long. But we were right on the course, I reflected, of the dinghy which 'Davies' piloted with such consummate skill through just such a fog ('five yards or so was the radius of our vision,' wrote 'Carruthers') to Memmert to spy on the conference at the salvage plant on that desolate sand-spit. I

turned up the chapter headed 'Blindfold to Memmert,' and read how, sounding with a notched boathook in the shallows, that masterly young sailor had felt his way across the *Buse Tief* to the eastern outlet of the *Memmert Balje*, the only channel deep enough to carry the dinghy through the half-bared sand-banks between Juist and the mainland. Our own problem, it seemed to me, was a very similar one to that which confronted 'Davies,' only, in our case, it was the entrance of the channel where the *Buse Tief* narrowed between the *Hohes Riff* and the *Itzendorf Plate* that had to be located. Failing that, we were destined to roost till the next tide on a sand-bank, and that meant we were out for all night, as there would be no chance of keeping to a channel, however well marked, in both fog and darkness.

Ten minutes went by—fifteen—twenty—with no sign of the buoy which marked the opening we were trying to strike. Now the engines were eased down to quarter-speed, and she lost weigh just in time to back off from a shining *glacis* of steel-grey sand that came creeping out of the fog. For the next ten minutes, with bare steerage weigh on, she nosed cautiously this way and that, like a man groping for a doorway in the dark. Then a hail from the lookout on the bow was echoed by exclamations of relief from the German officers. 'Here is the outer buoy,' one of them called across to us reassuringly; 'the rest of the way is well marked and easy to follow. We will soon be at Norddeich.'

Presently a second buoy appeared as we nosed on shoreward, then a second, and then a third, continuing the line of the first two. Speed was increased to 'Half,' and the intervals of picking up the marks correspondingly cut down. Confident that there was nothing more to worry about, I pulled out 'The Riddle' again, for I had just recalled that it was about half-way to Norddeich, in the *Buse Tief*, that 'Carruthers' had brought off his crowning exploit, the running aground of the tug and 'invasion' lighter—with Von Brunning, Boehme, and the mysterious 'cloaked passenger'—as they neared the end of the successful night trial trip in the North Sea. Substituting himself for the man at the wheel by a ruse, he had edged the tug over to starboard and was just thinking 'What the dickens'll happen to her?' when the end came; 'a *euthanasia* so mild and gradual (for the sands are fringed with mud) that the disaster was on us before I was aware of it. There was just the tiniest premonitory shuddering as our keel clove the buttery medium, a cascade of ripples from either

beam, and the wheel jammed to rigidity in my hands as the tug nestled up to her final resting place.'

And very like that it was with us. It was a guttural oath from somewhere forward rather than any perceptible jar that told me the launch had struck, and it was not till after the crew had been churning sand for half a minute that there was any perceptible heel. It had come about through one of the buoys being missing and the next in line out of place, one of the Germans reckoned; but whatever the cause, there we were—stuck fast. Or, at least, we would have been with any less resourceful and energetic a crew. If their very lives had depended on it, those four or five German seamen could not have worked harder, nor to better purpose, to get that launch free. At the end of a quarter of an hour their indefatigable efforts were rewarded, and a half-hour later we were settling ourselves in the warm compartment of our waiting train. The Hun has no proper sense of humour. Reverse the rôles, and any British bluejackets I have ever known would have run a German armistice commission on to the first sand-bank that hove in sight, and damned the consequences.

PINKERY POND.¹

At his feet lay Pinkery Pond,
Chapman's Barrows frowned beyond.
He would try a fall with Fate;
Love was swallowed up in hate.

Here he came to end it all,
Where the fern and foxglove tall
Laugh amid the gloom that plays
Round the pond for days and days :

Here Fate led him ; here come we
Fretting at our Destiny ;—
Destiny that bears and breeds
Sons to go the way she leads.

That's your lot—and thank the giver
If it makes you shrink and shiver ;
You can mend—or end it, man,
Share her sport or spoil her plan.

What's the trouble ? Storm or shine,
Laugh, my lad, and toe the line.
From within must come the light
That's to be your beacon bright.

What's the trouble ? Tell me that.
If 'twas care that killed a cat,
Square your shoulders, steel your heart :
Leave to fools poor pussy's part.

Say no more that man's a slave,
Earth a prison, life a grave ;
Ask the fern and foxglove tall,
Do they pine to end it all ?

¹ An artificial 'lakelet' in the wilds of Exmoor where a man drowned himself
—for love.

No, no, no ! no room for rue,
Fate the sorcerer is true :
Hold and mould the gift he gave you,
It will turn to gold and save you.

Let the lily-livered loon
Down his tools at life's high noon.
Man, you're made of sterner stuff,
Fight, till Fate cries ' Hold, enough ! '

Through the darkest night a ray
Finds for trav'lers bold a way ;
And the soul her torch will trim
Blithely, though the stars be dim.

Blench no more, no more despond,
Take for token Pinkery Pond,
Where the fern and foxglove tall
Teach us how to bear it all.

D. A. S.

*FOR THE SAKE OF THE LIVING, IN MEMORY
OF THE DEAD.*

At the door of a cottage in a Home County Village, a middle-aged man was standing, one Saturday afternoon. He was still in khaki of a sort, although no longer a soldier: he had had his discharge, to his great delight, a few weeks before; and was back at his old job, in his old village, in his own old home for which he had so often longed while in France. And he was one of the lucky; all had gone well with him while he was at the war, all had gone well with his wife and children, too; they were more sturdy and vigorous when he returned than when he had left them. Thus he really had, as his wife often told him, good reason to rejoice and be thankful. But no one would ever have thought it to see him, as he stood there, for he looked the veriest Jeremiah. There was gloom and desolation in his eyes, despondency in the very way he hung his head.

'Why, what is the matter? What has gone wrong?' a friend, who chanced to be passing, inquired.

'Oh! it's nought. I shall get used to it i' time I suppose,' the man replied, with a sigh so deep that it seemed to say he didn't much think he ever could.

Now the 'it,' as his friend soon learnt, was the village, or rather his life in the village, the life he had led so contentedly before he went to the war, and to which he had returned so gladly only a few weeks before.

'No, it ain't as it's dull, though it is dull, but I don't mind that,' he explained. 'What I do mind is how all seems so changed. The village ain't a bit as it used to be. Nought is as it used to be. My wife ain't a bit; and as for them lads! And they used to be such good lads! It's all their mother's doing. She says as how I'm never off their bones, and I knows as how they're never from under my feet. One 'ud think to hear her talk—she never used to talk like that—as how I was in her way. She's just gone off with the lads, or I 'ud be in her way now. There's no getting out of her way; there's nowhere to go to but the pub, and the pub's allus shut when it rains, and it allus rains now. It ain't a bit as it used to be.' He sighed again more dolefully even than before.

The man was right. Nothing is now quite as it used to be. Even in villages everything is changed and everyone. His wife, his children, he himself are none of them now as they were before the war. Then his wife did what he told her to do, did it without cavilling; it never even occurred to her to do otherwise. She had not a penny she could call her own; and in spending what he gave her, she always thought first of what he would like. That he should have the best of everything in the house, and that she and the children should take the 'remnings' and be thankful, seemed to her quite natural. Her business in life, so far as she could see, was to make him comfortable, and comfortable she made him. When he came home at night, the children were safe in bed; and, let him say what he would, he was to her Sir Oracle.

That was all very well in pre-war days; but a woman who for three whole years has had to take thought for herself and her children, to plan, contrive, and who has had a free hand, gone her own way, spent her own money, more money than her husband had ever had, cannot be expected to return to that sort of thing, she maintains; and with reason. In three years, a woman can do much levelling-up, especially when, in those years, she has become a citizen, been given a vote. She feels herself quite on a par with her husband now, feels that she has just as much right as he to have a say on what is passing; that she and her children have as much right, too, to the best of the food and any comfort there may be. And she shows it, and her children, who feel as she does, show it even more plainly; for while she was away doing well-paid work, they got out of hand. There is no sending them to bed now. They are, as their father says, never from under his feet. And he is not so good tempered as he used to be; the war has played havoc with his nerves; and, after three years of law and order, well-cooked regular meals, the casual ways of his wife, combined with the riotous ways of his sons, worry him. Nor is that all. He misses his old soldier-comrades; he feels very lonely away from them all, in this village where there is nowhere where one can go sure of meeting a friend.

Now, as it is with this man, so is it with many of the married ex-soldiers whose lot lies in villages; and before long it will be so with more. They have come home to find all things changed, as it seems, and that in itself is hard to bear; while, what makes it the harder, is that they themselves are changed. Things trouble them now that never troubled them before; what used to seem

quite natural seems intolerable now. The size of their cottages and the state they are in is a real trial to some of them. 'One can't whip a cat in this tumble-down little hole,' they complained. Others are upset by the crying of a baby. One young ex-soldier declared, only the other day, that he wished he was back in the Trenches. And all because his own son had taken to shrieking. 'He's a lucky dog. I wish I was him,' another exclaimed, when told that his brother was on his way to Cologne. 'There are no kiddies out there,' he added by way of explanation. Yet both these men had returned to their homes rejoicing aloud that they need never leave them again.

Then the doings and non-doings of wives are the cause of even more cherished grievances than either kiddies or cottages. 'She don't care a bit whether I gets any dinner or not.' 'She's never at home; she's always off somewhere or other.' 'Yes, she earns lots of money; she spends it too.' These are remarks that may be heard fairly frequently now in places where married ex-soldiers meet. For many women, who first went out to work when their husbands were at the war, still persist in going out. They like going out, it makes a change. They like, too, having money of their own to spend, and they see no reason why they should not go out, even though their going out spells comfortless homes, no homes at all in fact. This husbands with nerves ajar resent, of course, just as they resent, unreasonably perhaps, the many other things wives do now that they never dreamed of doing in pre-war days—giving tea-parties, going off to towns in search of bargains. And resentment leads to strife, especially in villages where couples live together in little cottages, and have nowhere where they can go when they wish to get out of each other's way. Little wonder there are married ex-soldiers who are finding it hard to settle down to village life.

It is not only men with wives who 'ain't a bit as they used to be,' however, that are finding this settling-down very hard. Men with good wives, or with no wives at all, are also finding it hard. The average village ex-soldier, indeed, is by no means so happy as he thought he would be, when he returned from the war. He has a vague feeling that there is something wrong somewhere, something out of joint. The fact is he finds living in a village very dull after living in a camp. He misses the Huts he had in France, his old Canteen, the Library and Halls; he misses, too, the pleasures provided for him there, the concerts,

plays, bands of music and diverse sports. Being fairly young, he does not so much mind things being changed. What he does mind is things being dull. And what he minds most of all is there being nowhere he can go when his work is done.

Within the last three years, I have been in some two hundred villages in search of parish halls, public libraries, clubs, institutes of any kind, indeed, to which the villagers may betake themselves in an evening, sure of finding a room well lighted and fairly comfortable, in which to sit and have a smoke, a read, a talk with a friend, a game of bagatelle, or even a rest. And I can count on my fingers those that I have found. In the overwhelming majority of English villages there is nowhere a man can go on a winter's evening, if he wish for a change from his home surroundings, excepting, perhaps, a public-house. And he cannot go there unless he have money in his pocket, and not always even then. When his day's work is done, his only refuge is his cottage, or half cottage, one room perhaps, or even a shakedown. And there babies may be crying, youngsters scrambling round, or quarrelling may be going on. None the less there he must stay, must spend his whole evening, unless he choose to wander about in the cold; for the chances are many that there is nowhere else where he can go. And this is undoubtedly at the root of much of the trouble. This in itself goes far towards explaining why ex-soldiers are finding it hard to settle down in villages, why they find village life so dull.

Village life here is not really duller now than it was before the war; still, to the men who have been at the war, it seems duller; and dull it undoubtedly is. In no country that I know, and I have sojourned in seventeen countries, is life in the average village so appallingly dull as in England. Yet in most other countries the conditions of rural life are much harder than here; men work for longer hours and lower wages, there is less comfort, more poverty, than here. None the less, so far as I can judge, life there is on the whole better worth living than here, more varied, more interesting. For almost everywhere, excepting here, it is realised that even villagers must have something in the way of pleasure, of change, something to break the dull routine of their daily life, to stir up new emotions, suggest new ideas, to set them a-thinking in fact. The villagers themselves feel this so strongly that if there be no pleasure at hand they turn into a pleasure what was devised as something quite different.

A pilgrimage to the tomb of a saint may not appeal to tastes

here, but in poor little Croatia it is quite otherwise. There the peasants go on pilgrimages much as here better-off folk go on joyrides. A pilgrimage is for them a huge picnic, one which they enjoy whole-heartedly, and which does them all the good in the world. In many foreign villages the whole population is kept interested and amused for months at a time by preparations for a miracle play at Christmas, or a Zither Concert, in honour of the Virgin, in May. Such pleasures may seem childish, but they are pleasures, none the less, recreations, and as such they serve their purpose. In Balkan villages, shooting contests, scouting expeditions, the holding of amateur manoeuvres, framing of stratagems for the routing of foes, all rank as recreations, and are to the natives a source of intense delight. Go where one will, indeed, one finds that almost everywhere means have been devised of relieving the dull monotony of village life in winter, almost everywhere excepting here in England.

Here, in most villages, there is nothing to make life less dull, nothing in the way of recreation. Even the old dance on the green seems to have gone out of fashion; and with it the Harvest-home and wait-singing. Nor is there anything to keep minds on the alert, to secure them against rust. The average English villager never hears a lecture, year in, year out, or even a speech unless there is an election. Books are a luxury beyond his reach, for the nearest library is probably miles away; and he rarely sees a daily paper. If he wishes to hear the news, he must go to the public-house, just as he must go there if he wishes to find someone to talk to. And going to the public-house is good neither for his head nor his pocket. He has, therefore, practically no chance of sharpening his wits, freeing his brain of its cobwebs, being put in the way of thinking, or of having his corners knocked off. He has no chance, in fact, of developing the best that in him lies, or of being fitted to live a life worth living. And meanwhile, although he can earn enough to live on, he can make no provision for his old age. So long as this state of things continues, there is not much hope that the younger and more energetic of the villagers, who have been to the war, will ever again settle down quite contentedly to rural life; nor is there any hope at all, or so it seems to me, that many of the ex-soldier townsmen who are now bent on going to live in rural districts will stay there, if they go. So long as this state of things does continue, indeed, one can hardly wish that they should, when one sees the deadening effect living in rural districts often has.

A few months ago, a bright, alert, intelligent looking young fellow returned from the war to work on the land. He was the very picture of health, strength, and all that is wholesome: he held himself erect as he walked; he was spick and span, and had a cheery greeting for everyone. I saw him the other day. He was slouching along the road with his shoulders higher than his ears; and he looked twenty years older than he had ever looked before—he had lost every trace alike of youth and alertness. I did not know him at first, he was so changed—changed, so far as I could make out, because he was living in a dull little village after living in the midst of the bustle and excitement of a camp.

Now there is no reason why an English village should be dull; no reason, indeed, why it should not be made so lively that even ex-soldiers could live there contentedly. And if they could, it would undoubtedly be much better for them, maimed as many of them are, shattered in health, with 'rattled' nerves, that they should live there rather than in towns; much better for the whole nation too, financially as well as socially and politically. It behoves us all, therefore, surely for the sake of England as well as for the sake of these men who have fought for her and for us, to set to work forthwith to try to turn villages into places where they can live not only contentedly, but happily, without losing touch with their fellows, and taking an interest in what is going on in the world. For this can be done without much spending of money, although not without much cudgelling of brains, taking of trouble. That it can, the Danes have proved; and from them we could, if we would, learn how to do it.

Of the countries I know, Denmark is certainly the one that has solved the village life problem most satisfactorily. There the average villager is just as alert intellectually, as keenly interested in what is going on at home and abroad, as eager for the latest news, as the average townsman. When cheap science primers were first published in Danish, there was a greater demand for them in rural districts than in towns. It is in villages more often than not that Parliamentary candidates are asked the most searching questions; and it is village constituents who keep the strictest watch over Folketing doings; and, when things go wrong, call Ministers to account most promptly. I was never in a Danish cottage where I did not find both newspapers and books; and I never came across a Danish peasant who did not know more about England and her colonies than any English agricultural

labourer I have ever met. Again and again, when in rural Denmark during the Boer War, I was amazed at the questions I was asked as to its whys and wherefores ; I was amazed, too, on one occasion, by being told, by a poor old woman, that Oliver Cromwell, had he been alive, would never have allowed such a war to be waged. Nor is it only in science and politics that these peasants are interested ; they are also keenly interested in history and literature, especially in their own folklore, more interested, indeed, than townspeople. And in this there is nothing extraordinary ; for practically they have the same opportunities as townspeople for reading, learning, studying, and they have more leisure than the average townsman has to turn these opportunities to account.

In almost every Danish village there is a Meeting House built at the expense of the whole village, and managed by a Committee of the villagers, for the use of the whole village. This House is the Social centre of the village, the place where men and women alike turn their steps instinctively when in quest of a change, a rest, something to read, someone to talk to, someone to listen while they talk. It varies according to the size and wealth of the village ; in some places it is a fine building ; in others it is merely an old cottage or barn that has been turned into a House. No matter how poor it may be, however, it has always a Hall, i.e. a well-lighted, comfortable room, large enough to hold seats for all the adult villagers. At one end of the Hall there is generally a platform ; and at the other there is always a space reserved as a reading-room and library, unless, indeed, there be in the House a separate reading-room. For in Denmark no self-respecting village community would ever dream of being without some place where not only daily papers, but weekly and monthly reviews, as well as books, may be read. Not that the villagers are dependent on libraries for their reading. Even the very poor among them often combine to subscribe for a journal, or buy a book which they each read in turn.

In a well-managed village, the Meeting House is always a busy place. There one night at least every week in winter the young men meet together for physical culture. They have their unpaid Sandow, and go through a regular course of training. There also one night a week old and young alike meet together to hear a lecture. About twice a month a grand debate is held, the debaters being the villagers themselves, helped out by University students, perhaps. Twice a month, too, there is a concert ; while from time

to time there are private theatricals, social evenings, and even dances.

Sometimes the lecturers are paid, but very rarely; for they are as a rule either professors, students, or politicians; and they make it part of their regular work to lecture in villages gratis. In some districts there is a Committee, the duty of which is to see that all the villages are well supplied with lectures.

It is no unusual thing to find, in quite a little village, a political club solemnly watching over the Government and sending them messages of praise or warning; a rifle club, too, the members of which spend their leisure practising shooting that they may the better defend their country. Then almost everywhere there is an agricultural society; and its members meet together to talk over the different ways of working land, and discuss new methods. Attached to the agricultural society there is often a co-operative society, through which the villages buy their supplies and sell their produce. All these societies are in touch with the Department for Agriculture, which keeps them informed as to the results of the latest experiments in scientific land culture, and sends its officials down to make things clear to them.

Meeting Houses, clubs, and societies would undoubtedly do fine work in Danish villages, even if they stood alone; but what gives special value to them is that behind them are Peasants' High Schools, as well as Agricultural Colleges. In Denmark, where the whole population is only some three millions, there are seventy-five Peasants' High Schools, i.e. colleges where not only peasant farmers, but agricultural labourers go in winter to study history, literature, political economy, hygiene, and many things besides. Every year some ten thousand students, a good third of whom are agricultural labourers, spend the 'dead' months in the High Schools; and they all spread the light when they are back in their villages, for they try, by lecturing and leading debates, to teach their comrades what the school professors have taught them. Debates play a great rôle in Denmark. They are an unfailing source of delight to many of the peasants among whom they do a wonderful work, not only brightening their wits, but keeping alive their interest in things outside their village. And debates do not cost a penny, it must be noted, while even High Schools cost very little. Most of them, indeed, manage to support themselves with the help of the Government grant of £2 per student. For admission is not gratis: before he goes

there for a winter course, every student must by hook or crook save £8 wherewith to pay for his board, lodging, and tuition. And this he can do, if he be thrifty; for the Danish peasants are not only 'the most enlightened peasants in Europe,' as Björnson declares, they are also the most prosperous. Among them there are no signs of poverty; on the contrary they all look well fed; and, so far as an outsider can judge, the great mass of them live in comfort. And all because they are experts in agriculture; for the soil of Denmark has nothing to recommend it, nor has the climate.

Needless to say, village life in Denmark was not always as it is to-day, nor were Danish peasants as they are. They, indeed, within living memory, did not differ markedly from English agricultural labourers. Curiously enough, they owe their present well-being, in a great measure, to their past misfortunes. The loss of Schleswig-Holstein, coming as it did after the loss of their fleet to England, and their disastrous war in '48, was a terrible blow for the whole nation, one that stunned townsfolk and country-folk alike; for it seemed to them the beginning of the end, proof that Denmark was doomed. And doomed she might have been, had not a band of fervent patriots thrown themselves heart and soul, as the veriest Crusaders, into the task of saving her. They revived the great work Bishop Grundtvig had started after the war against England, going through the land from end to end, appealing with passionate force to their countrymen to rouse themselves from the fatalistic apathy into which, in their despair, they were sinking; to fight tooth and nail against the demoralisation by which they were beset. The result was a great national revival, class was drawn nearer to class than ever before; a feeling of brotherhood sprang up, a feeling that in this, their hour of trial, they must all work together, must each, so far as in him lay, give a helping hand to his fellows, give it first of all to the peasants, as it was they who needed it most.

There was great misery in rural districts at the time; for much of the land was badly worked as well as poor; and the peasants had heavier burdens to bear than they could bear, depressed and demoralised as they were. The Crusaders therefore set to work at once to teach them how to farm it profitably, seeing to it the while that the terms on which they held it were bettered. Experts in agriculture went about from village to village, lecturing, holding demonstrations, teaching scientific methods of farming, helping

the farmers to form co-operative societies for buying and selling, and to work in co-operation with one another. As time passed the Government joined in the work; agricultural colleges and itinerant schools were organised; and a thoroughly good education in their calling was brought within the reach not only of peasant farmers, but of labourers.

Meanwhile the Crusaders were keenly alive to the fact, that, as man does not live by bread alone, material prosperity was not in itself enough to render his life worth living. And the lives of each one of these peasants must be rendered worth living if he were ever to escape from his slough of despond, ever to face the world cheerily and become a useful citizen, able to do good work for his country as well as himself. This was a point on which they all agreed, and there were men of all sorts and conditions among them. While some of them were at work teaching the peasant how to farm that he might live in comfort; others were therefore striving to bring pleasure within his reach and put him in the way of enjoying his life; while others again were trying to inspire him with the wish to turn his life to good account. Famous divines preached eloquent sermons in little village churches; great statesmen gave stirring addresses on village greens; and in old barns artistes of renown took part in concerts and plays, recited patriotic poems, and told thrilling tales of the heroic deeds Danes had done in bygone days, and might do in days to come. Soon there was something or other going on, one day at least every week, in almost every village; something which not only gave the villagers delight, and thus helped them to shake off their despondency, but which set them a-thinking, and thus made for education as well as pleasure. Before long they began to read, to clamour for books, to question the lecturers, and join in the debates. They began, too, to build or rent Meeting Houses for themselves, and organise book supplies, libraries; and then the battle was won. All that was needed was time for life in Danish villages to become what it is, and Danish peasants to become as they are.

Now, if the Danes, after a terrible defeat, could do all that to better the lot of those who live in their villages, surely we, after a great victory, might do something to better the lot of those who live in ours. We ought, indeed, to do something, and at once, if only for the sake of the villagers who went to the war and helped to win for us our victory. For their sake we ought to see to it that, in every village, there is at least a Meeting House

of some sort, a somewhere where they can spend their evenings in decent comfort. Such a place would cost so little and would mean so much to many of them. No better thank-offering than a Meeting House could be given to the men who went forth from their villages to fight for us, and are now, or soon will be, again in their old homes; nor could a better memorial than a Meeting House be raised to those who went forth, but will never return.

EDITH SELLERS.

THE SPONGE.

HE hadn't been a week in Kyle when it came to him suddenly, all in a flash, the theme he had been waiting for. He knew it was somewhere of course all the time, just round the corner, or rather *they* were there, for surely their name was legion; but how to overtake, surprise, spring upon, seize, and carry off even one of the band was the problem that had bothered him for the last fifteen years. He was thirty-five years old now, and it was when he was in the very early twenties that others—friends and editors of magazines—began to uphold his own conviction as to his power of writing, his power even of winning by his pen fame and success beyond the ordinary; the editors gave positive proof of their belief in him by printing his stories and paying for them, the friends talked largely and loudly about him, and by the time he was twenty-five he belonged to the select band of young writers who 'counted' and who could be depended on to count for very much more in the future; he had 'arrived' very lightly equipped, on the strength of a few brilliant trifles, but heavy and interesting luggage was following him you felt sure; when he started to unpack this, you might be assured of a display of riches dazzling to his generation.

What he had displayed to the public so far had been nothing of larger bulk than a number—a considerable number—of short tales. His genius (it was the word his friends used) had expressed itself in short stories of an unviolent kind. He could capture and put on paper in extremely lucid language most delicate and intricate psychic relationships, adventures of the mind, spiritual crises of the most subtle fragile kind, making them so right, so true, that the most fastidious critics could not but praise them, and making them at the same time so simple and so exciting that ordinary people found pleasure in their perusal. He was never crude, and he was never precious.

But, of course, the short story was not going for ever to content him. They were mere trials of his wings, exhibitions of what he could do, wonderful feats, spectacular tricks undertaken to prove to himself how perfectly he was master of his machine, how even at his most daring moments his hands never hesitated or fumbled on the levers, never for an instant did he lose control. He was as capable he knew of long flights as of these brilliant brief dartings,

of sustained soaring as of vivid flashings but—whither should he fly? His flight would be so just and true, so brilliant and tremendous that it called for a worthy objective. He needed a great theme.

Many of the themes of his short tales were great but in a tiny way. They didn't ask for sustained elaboration, they could adequately be dealt with and dismissed without going outside the limits which editors set to the 'short story,' he hadn't to compress them, they asked for no more space, demanded no large expanse of canvas. But he knew that there were themes that did demand space, his fellow-writers seemed to find them without great difficulty, why in Heaven's name couldn't he?

And now after fifteen years of conscious searching he had found one. Found it in a flash of a second in Kyle Church, found it while he imagined he was following with attention the reading of the Second Lesson. It was the parson who had supplied it; little red-faced sleepy man, *he* was the theme, his sleepiness, his slovenly middle-age, his crumpled surplice, his stumbles over the prayers, his lack of attention. He had presented himself and all his appendages in a flash to Luke, had said to him in that clear unmistakable voice in which ideas always spoke, 'Here I am, use me,' and in the next second had made it clear that he couldn't be treated in a short story, that he possessed richesses, amplitudes that asked for space unlimited to spread themselves upon, he presented himself as the theme for a novel.

The more Luke thought it over, the more rich, the more ample it became. It was vast. He saw that it wasn't going to concern itself only with the parson's personal history, it would imply the history of his whole class (which also was Luke's class), it would imply a certain amount of the history of Ireland. It started by presenting itself as the adventure of a clergyman who is young and energetic, who has led an active life in busy town curacies, and who is rewarded at an early age by being made rector of a country parish. His congregation would consist of twenty-five souls (Luke had counted twelve people in the country church), he would not have more than a day's work to do in the week, and gradually, slowly (how fascinating to watch in detail the slow advance!) he must lose all his fine freshness, all his enthusiasm, the spring of his activity must weaken, weaken, till he ended by becoming like sloppy Mr.—whatever his name was, droning out the prayers. Should it be a study in negations, a tragedy in which the villain of the piece is just that nothing ever happens? That idea dismissed itself; to

make his tragedy worth the writing his hero must be rather exceptionally gifted for the act of living, and if so gifted he would be strong enough to break away from mere negation. No, his hero who loved life and people and activity, who belonged to the church militant rather than to the church contemplative, must need for his undoing a train of events not necessarily far-fetched or violent, but a little out of the ordinary. Luke saw him not always patient, saw him unhappy. He decided that he must love and be unhappy in his love, he must love hopelessly, love, perhaps a Catholic—yes, by Jove that was it and—

The theme suddenly unfolded itself in quite unexpected amplitude. His hero became almost unimportant personally because so portentously important as an actor in a vast drama. The theme revealed itself in its true colours, wasn't ashamed of being labelled, boldly announced itself as being a study of the deathless antagonism between the two faiths.

But it wasn't going to be a violent drama. It must be for the most part unconscious, just the inevitable wearing down and away of the weaker of the two antagonists. It must never degenerate into being a 'problem' novel, it must teach nothing, prove nothing, point out no reform that should be made. The big issue must be vast and impersonal, but all the detail of it immensely personal—the mere anecdote of it material that in other hands would go to make a 'best seller.'

At this point his theme seemed to him to lose its balance, its rightness and sanity became obscured. He turned his mind back to the starting-point, to the little slack, sleepy parson. But why sleepy and slack? He didn't look like a man who had suffered actively, one couldn't suspect him of a tragic love affair; in his case it must be a question of mere negation, but negation plus something, plus some force, some hidden power, that is to say *apparent* negation, something very active that ambuscaded itself behind a barricade of quiescence, something very powerful that pretended to be the personification of ineffectiveness,—but what was it?

His eyes searched the landscape, and the fields and woods, the damp sunshine and the soft wind smiled back at him in answer. He met them with a surprised incredulous 'You?' and they sighed a faint assent. His theme immediately righted itself: no wonder it had seemed out of balance, for, of course, the church was only half the theme, the other half was the country—this sunny friendly southern country which must smile in gentle welcome on his hero

and gradually lap him round and fold him in and put him to sleep. He must be strong enough to fight the powers of darkness, but not the powers that came veiled in soft sunshine; he mustn't be strong enough to fight the long mild wet winters, the enervating persistent south-west wind, the 'stuffiness' of the valleys, the airless woods. These must weave around him thin webs, filmy threads so fragile as to be imperceptible in the spinning, they must gently blind his eyes to all distant views, softly seal his ears to all outside voices. In the end he must be offered a road of escape and must be too sapped of energy to take it, he must throw up the sponge with hardly a murmur, hardly a conscious gesture.

That was his theme in four words,—throwing up the sponge. Hadn't Luke's class been doing it these three generations past, sometimes with groans and curses and struggles, sometimes with mute acceptance of the inevitable? Wasn't his religion doing it, retiring without disorder, fighting a gallant losing battle? It was part of the battle of class and creed not to admit that you were beaten, but the moment was quickly arriving when that attitude would become ridiculous, when the most dignified prayer was a *Nunc dimittis*. Now Luke should speak for his class finally and for ever, should throw up their sponge with a superb gesture, throw it up—as he exuberantly expressed it—with unerring aim, right into the blue, for all the world to wonder at. By Jove, what a theme, what a theme!

The small property he had unexpectedly inherited at Kyle included a pleasant little house, and by letting the land for grazing he found himself in possession of a sufficient income to live on. Eventually he would sell the property, but he determined to sacrifice three years to his theme. It only existed at present in broad outline, all the delicate intimate details needed careful filling in, and a town-bred cosmopolitan like himself had no stock of knowledge to draw upon, he would have to collect it on the spot. But it was worth the trouble, it was worth three years of his life, it was worth, if necessary, five years.

During those years the details presented themselves quickly and in abundance. A chance acquaintance, a statement by a neighbour about someone else enabled him to create his Catholic family with ease. They were to be rich, would be the 'big people' of his hero's parish, would be cultured and must offer to the young man all the beauties of art, music, and literature which he would have missed—Luke felt he must have missed—during his curacies.

Tennyson might have stayed at that Catholic house, it must at any rate have a tradition of literature and of music. Particularly of music, for Luke had never in his short stories had space enough to let himself 'go' on this particular subject, but he promised himself now a veritable debauch. The family must be charming and gracious and must make the young man welcome till they found out the danger they and he were running. That danger must never culminate in anything approaching a 'big scene' (Luke liked eschewing 'big scenes'), it must be nipped in its earlier stages by someone, some more far-seeing relative, and the girl in question, quite unconscious of being the danger-spot, must be sent hurriedly away, must marry. Only when he found her gone must the poor hero realise that he loved her. And then there came into the scene, suggested he knew not by whom, a man neither Catholic nor Protestant, a youngsquireen, but unlike othersquireens, for he would hold himself aloof from his class, and though he would be a sportsman, a fisher, and a shooter, he would love beyond these pursuits music and the pleasures of a town. He would be a man with a twist in his nature or in his history—perhaps he would be illegitimate—would be lazy and without ambition, but with initiative enough to escape from the country a couple of times a year and to go to London, where he would spend his six months' savings in fast living, but a fastness that would include an orgy of concerts and operas. Luke's hero was to have a deep love of music, undeveloped until he came into contact with the Catholic family, and then suddenly checked in its development by the chill that would naturally fall between the Rectory and the great house after the girl's escape and marriage. It is then that he meets this man, and it was easy to appraise the dangers that might arise from their contact. His hero was friendless and alone, was disappointed in his love, was craving for music, for life, for—for anything. He must be tempted and must fall, must consent to a visit to London with the squireen, a visit involving, he knew, half-hinted-at sins, *saletés* of mind and body. But something must intervene, there must be no 'crash,' his friend must die suddenly, violently before the plan comes off, and the poor hero must be left alone. That was the essence of it, left alone. Left alone at the mercy of the country, left alone to accumulate each year a thin layer of adipose tissue which would numb and coarsen mind and body. At the end a vigorous college friend arrives, an overworked rector from Middlesex or Lancashire, and offers him a road of escape,

offers him a curacy. He can't take it—or does he take it and throw up the sponge in the end, violently, by suicide?

That was the only detail in the story that Luke hesitated over. Very soon the whole train of events had learned their places, had learned to march in even file and steady step to his piping. Their march was so exact that no preliminary drilling was necessary. Sometimes one of his short stories had demanded half a dozen preliminary essays before it could be induced to clarify itself, before it could be trained to march in rank. But his great achievement, his novel with the big theme needed no such tentative treatment, within eighteen months it stood four-square in his mind.

All except the very end. The exact alighting spot at the end of his long flight remained obscure. The exact method of the final chucking of the sponge.

He dreamed all day of his novel during that first hot summer he spent at Kyle; he turned it over and over in his mind as he lay out in a long deck chair in front of the house among a tangle of weeds that had been once a flower garden. To retrieve that garden would be the work of a couple of years, and as he was so soon to sell the place the labour seemed hardly worth while. Had he intended to settle there permanently there were many improvements he might have made in house and grounds, but to spend money on what he was so soon to part from seemed foolishness. In its own way it was a busy year for him, for if he cleared no gardens and mended no roofs he was all the while planning out and arranging the intricacies of his theme. He dreamed of it during the long wet winter spent for the most part by the log fire in the shabby dining-room; he talked of it to the literary friends who occasionally spent week-ends with him.

They all agreed it was good, it was big, and that he, and perhaps he alone, could do justice to it. It was so good and big that it dwarfed everything else in his mind, its great spread of canvas demanded all his wind, there wasn't a puff left for the tiniest story. His friends regretted this, thought that he might have spared a breath to propel some little craft, but he smilingly declared that impossible. He was keeping back everything for his big effort.

Yet he hesitated before starting on the task of writing it. It was all so nearly perfect, so arranged, it seemed a pity to begin until its perfection was absolute. If he could only decide about the final chapter. Was it to be suicide or not suicide?

'Write it, my dear fellow, to the penultimate chapter, and

then, if you're still at sea, toss for it,' his nearest friend urged him.

He couldn't do that. He felt all the rest to be so just, so true, that he couldn't descend to such base means. Besides he had no right to feel 'at sea' about such an important point; at times he half suspected his doubt must point to some fatal weakness in the construction of his book. He decided to wait, some day—to-morrow perhaps—the voice would be heard unmistakably saying 'This is the way.'

And he waited, the sponge in his hand. Waited to give it that noble, heavenly spin, waited . . . waited . . .

He grew to love Kyle, grew to love its river, the airless valleys, the leisurely life of the place. He stirred away from it less and less; it seemed a pity to lose any of it when he was soon—next year probably—going to lose it completely and for ever.

And at last his patience was rewarded. As it was the parson who had given him the foundation-stone, so now it was the parson who supplied the final turret. He had come to see Luke, and, as he had often done before, the latter was delicately probing him, trying to find out what he felt and thought, or rather how extensive was his absence of thought and feeling. At last he frankly asked him why he had spent thirty-five years in this parish, why he had never tried to escape to some more active sphere of work.

The parson as frankly answered him, laughing good humouredly.

'I suppose by the time I should have gone I hadn't energy enough to go. There's something in this place, the climate—'

'Yes, yes,' said Luke, and then suggested that possibly in certain cases the loneliness and absence of work, the objectlessness, the 'something' he spoke of might lead to disaster, to tragedy.

'Oh, it leads to drink sometimes—nothing worse—and to that very seldom. One hasn't energy enough to be wicked.'

There it was in a flash! Of course, his hero wouldn't have energy enough for suicide, would be too wanting in initiative to destroy himself. What an idiot he had been not to see that obvious thing before! But the parson continued:

'Haven't you felt it too? I mean the way this place and climate take away one's energy? Why, when you came here you said you were only coming for a couple of years and were then going to sell the place. That's fifteen years ago—I was counting up yesterday—yet you're here still.'

'Ah, I'm going now—to-morrow,' Luke declared. 'I've been waiting, looking for something. I've found it at last.'

Yes, he'd go. He'd go back to a town and write his great novel in a year. He had it all now, every single detail of it from the first word to the last.

But, because it was so perfect, because he had it all 'by heart,' as children say, was it worth writing down? He could write it well, he knew, no living writer could display it in all its details with his subtlety and simplicity. Other writers had more power and could have made of it a Zolaesque drama—he thanked God the idea had never come to *them*, that *they* had never worshipped in Kyle Church!—and, of course, many could have written it sentimentally; but he, he only, could treat the theme with balance and justice. His version would be so balanced and just that he wondered whether anyone would realise its absolute truth. No one would believe it, but that didn't trouble him, for the thing that mattered was that *he* believed it, he knew it to be true, it was his possession, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, the mere writing of it could not make it more completely his, and wasn't that all that mattered?

And, if he wasn't going to write it, why leave Kyle? Why not end his days there? If he sold the place now it would be bought by some Catholic farmer, if he didn't sell it the cousin to whom he had willed it would be certain to do so, in either case their family, which had been connected with Kyle for more than two hundred years, would be gone, swamped, blotted out, the sponge would have been thrown up. What did he gain by going back to the world? He would have to start to write again if he did so, and had he anything to say except this great thing which he no longer wanted to do more than whisper to himself? Other writers had taken his place, well, let them keep it. But, possibly, he had grown a little sluggish, and he decided on a compromise. He gave himself another year in the country, after that he would go back to work.

So he lives on at Kyle through the wet warm winters, the airless summers. He has grown stout. The weeds still grow in the garden, the slates are still missing from the roof. He is leaving the place next year, so why should he spend money on it? He reads little, he thinks little. He is quite happy. When the moment comes for him to cease to exist his final gesture will be no defiant throwing of the sponge in the face of Heaven. Gently it will slip from his nerveless fingers.

LENNOX ROBINSON.

PEPYS AT THE LANE.

BY C. E. LAWRENCE.

It was the most natural thing in the world. The moon was shining on Tower Hill, illuminating the warehouses, the parapet, the stone street, and, vaguely in the beyond, the grey old Tower—which has seen infinitely more history than will ever be written—when pit-pat, with tapping stick and a consequential air, I saw approach a round little man. He was clad in a plum-coloured coat, a yellow waistcoat, a cocked hat, and wore a large full-bottomed wig. He stopped and stared at me curiously, as if I were a wild foreigner or the creature of another age—as I was.

‘Mr. Pepys, I presume?’ said I.

He waved in acknowledgment a plump, important hand. It was Mr. Pepys—Mr. Samuel Pepys of the Admiralty—revisiting the glimpses of the moon. I watched him gather in the impressions made by my garb, which, I suppose, with all its efforts after the extreme of fashion, is a good deal less coloured and picturesque than was the dress of the Stuarts.

‘And you, sir,’ he remarked, ‘are some stranger from the South Seas—or Ireland, or that world of which Plato speaks, Atlantis?’

‘I, sir, am a subject of his Majesty King George the Fifth.’

He eyed me curiously, and repeated my words; a second time repeated them, as though their meaning was not easy to accept and digest.

‘Is he—this king—this majesty, one of the blessed Stuarts?’

‘Oh no,’ I answered. ‘Thank the Lord, we have done with them!’

I gave him rapidly a potted version of English history from the point he had left it in the Diary, accomplishing my light-hearted journey over the fields of time in ten minutes or less; and paused breathless. I really think he had not heard a word. He was gazing at the Tower with lack-lustre eyes, and, his mouth open, gasped like a landed fish, drowning in unaccustomed air.

Mr. Pepys was suddenly bereft of his consequence. I waited. It took some while for him to recover his wits and restore his self-importance. He came to himself at last, stared in turn deliberately at the gloom of warehouses, the lighted lamps; and then at the

White Tower and the stars overhead. Orion was wheeling at the south. The Great Bear glittered above the turrets of the keep.

'Betty—pretty Betty—and my wife! Mrs. Knipp, my Lady Castlemaine, Anne Hyde, the naughty Portsmouth!'

'Dust and ashes, Mr. Pepys.'

'What a waste of prettiness! It did my heart good, I remember, to see my Lady Castlemaine's underclothing hanging in the air in the garden of Whitehall.—Dust and ashes! . . . How many years have passed since all this happened?' The manner of his questioning was wistful.

'Two hundred and fifty.'

'Sad! Sad! Even I must be forgotten.'

'No, Mr. Pepys. You are much remembered. Your work for the Board of Admiralty, your efforts during the Fire——'

'Heigh! Is that so?' The words inspired and encouraged him. He lost his sadness and wistfulness. It was as if a rain-drenched cock-sparrow, depressed and drab, had suddenly put on the livery of a goldfinch, with the pertness of a robin.

'Let us take a walk along Thames Street,' he said.

I followed him gladly. Neither of us spoke a word. He gazed about him, earnestly accepting impressions. Barking Church cheered him, the Customs House depressed him, the Coal Exchange troubled him; Billingsgate saddened him until he sniffed its ancient and fishlike smell, and that, with St. Magnus, made him a man again.

People had passed us, scavengers were at work in the street; he seemed not to see them; they saw not him. It was almost eerie, walking with that vivid, important ghost through those haunts so old and altered to him, so dirty and ugly to both of us.

He found his way by Godliman Street to St. Paul's and gazed with eyes of devouring interest at the 'monumentum' of his acquaintance, Christopher Wren. The sight cheered him wonderfully. He turned to look at me with something of a smirk, then hurried down Ludgate Hill with confident steps and flourished cane. The expression of his wig and plum-coloured back suggested personal pride—pride that the great cathedral was the product of his days. He was yet once more a cock of Cockayne.

He found his way with some fumbling, having evidently accepted the fact that my London was not his London, though there were sufficient remains and similarities to guide him pretty well aright.

He went to the 'King's Theatre' by Drury Lane. The building was different from that he had known, where Mistress Ellen Gwynn had sold oranges.

He gave a cry of delight. Most ghosts wail—so story-books say. This being no story, but the truth, I am able to asseverate that Mr. Pepys gave a cry of triumphant recognition. It rose with confidence from his spookish lips. The women who sold oranges—large ladies, bonneted, elderly—had no idea of the excitement they had caused. It was the ancient trade, the time-honoured business. Nearly three hundred years before this twentieth-century evening, oranges had been sold and bought at those theatre portals; descendants of the huckstresses of 'pretty Nelly's' day continued to vend the noble fruit.

I watched his satisfaction fade. It went; it went as the joy of an April day may be veiled by the coursing clouds. These ladies were not like those ladies. It had, incidentally, become an entirely honourable profession. The beauty and winsomeness of the original vendors was gone.

'Perhaps women are not so pretty now,' said the immortal Samuel sapiently. 'Od's goose! There could not be such loveliness as shone in our Charles's London.' He smirked, and remembered—memories.

He put two fingers into his waistcoat pocket and brought out a silver crown. It shone in the electric light, the sickly ghost of its minted ancestor. He placed it grandly on the basket, and seized a fruit. His fingers grasped, but could not lift. The material is too gross for immaterial hands. The unopaque Pepys relinquished the effort, and entered the theatre. The silver crown continued to shine on the basket; so on behalf of its donor I took two oranges, and the merchant in her bonnet of moth-eaten crepe blandly asked twopence. I paid the pennies, pocketed the fruit, and followed Pepys.

He had marched right into the theatre, after having deposited another ghostly crown on the sill of the pay-box, and entered the pit. I have reason to believe he walked through the doors, finding they did not open to his push; but of that I cannot be certain. I paid with heavier coin and sat with him in the darkness, immediately behind a couple. Little did Strephon in khaki and his coaxing and amorous Chloris know they were so near to an English immortal. In the gloom they ardently embraced; in the silence they snuggly kissed.

Pepys gave me a vigorous poke and whispered: 'I used to do that—in church!' I remembered he did; is it not recorded in the chronicles of his book? Disembodied spirits retain a deal of human nature.

The pantomime was in full blast. Pepys seemed thoroughly to enjoy it. He recognised the wheezes, rejoiced in the voice and gag of the leading comedian, watched the dancing with excited eyes; and confessed at last that the stage had not quite so much magnificence in the days of the Merry Monarch. It was the ballet with its shapeliness of limb and robes of glory, its shimmering splendour and gorgeous colouring, its musical clash and inspiration of movement—together with the robust enthusiasm of the conductor of the orchestra—which finally overpowered him.

His eyes shone with mingled admiration and dismay.

'We had nothing like that. I lived centuries too soon!'

The pathos of this confession was poignantly saddening. I forgot the music and the dancing; the theatre, all, until the curtain came down to a climax and a hurricane of appreciation.

We escaped into Catherine Street. Mr. Pepys ceased his tremors and caught his—what may be the spiritual counterpart of—breath. His lips moved, but I could not hear a sound. I felt it incumbent on me to remind him that he enjoyed plentiful compensations of a similar character in his so-called golden days.

'Your diary——' I began.

'My diary, sirrah!' he repeated sharply, staring at me. 'You have not read my diary!'

'Oh yes, Mr. Pepys, I have. It has been a most popular book. The shorthand has been transcribed, and every word—all——'

'All?' It was like a wail from the tomb. 'My diary—all!'

His eyes glazed, he fell back, seeming to swoon; he was gone.

I was in Catherine Street; there was a puddle by where he had been standing.

All of him was vanished, leaving not a rack behind.

THE ART OF LETTER-WRITING.

THE art of letter-writing is a gift of the gods, but, fortunately, it is a talent which has been distributed with no grudging hand. As with all arts, there are degrees in its mastership, and it is given only to a few to excel.

Madame de Sévigné and Lord Chesterfield have no modern compeers; but, as the writers of fascinating epistles, they have many rivals among our soldiers, and, were it not for those necessary but irksome restrictions under which the correspondence of the trenches is conducted, the future historian would have at his command an immense quantity of vivid, living narrative by which to correct the perspective of the official documents upon which he must rely for his knowledge of events. Unfortunately, the censor's definition of 'matters of military importance' is so comprehensive that, when a soldier lets himself go, and, hot from the mouth of the Inferno, flings his glowing thoughts and the quick picture of his experiences into lively and sparkling language, the hard, impassive, unimaginative official pencil obliterates it all, and the letter reaches its destination emasculate and cold. So, by harsh experience, the soldier learns to steady his pen when official 'secrets' race fleet-foot to its point, and nowadays it is the rarest event to come across any vital reference to things which matter. In strictly military circles this may be a matter for congratulation, but, from the point of view of literature and history, it is a calamity.

In common with all other medical officers attached to a hospital abroad, it has fallen to my lot to censor many letters, and the experience has taught me a great deal. At first the duty is, frankly, an unpleasant one. One feels that one is, in some sort, an eaves-dropper listening to an intimate conversation between two friends. This feeling is accentuated when one is censoring letters from a man to his wife, or from a young soldier to his sweetheart. These letters are often very sacred things, written for one pair of eyes alone, and after a few days of experience one gets into the habit of passing a hawk-like, swift glance over them to see that no place-names or impending military operations are mentioned, and passing them unread. I know that many women at home bitterly resent the

knowledge that the little tender things their husbands may have written to them have been seen by other eyes as well; but let them be comforted: there is no personal element in the censor's scrutiny; he does not know them, they do not know him, his memory is probably short, and a sense of honour binds him.

In spite of—or is it because of the universality of education?—a strange similarity marks a majority of the letters. But sometimes one comes across an exotic flower. It is not always the work of a man whose grammar is perfect, or whose spelling is above suspicion, but it bears upon it the impress of originality, of fresh thought, and of the personality that lies behind it. The best letters are always those which reveal the writer: they are living epistles. It is a great thing to be able to pour one's personality through the point of a pencil on to a sheet of paper. In that way literary genius lies, and more than one of our soldiers have the gift, and are completely unaware of it.

It is said that an aspiring small boy, eager to enter the Navy, once on a time astonished the highly moral 'hanging committee' at the Admiralty by answering the presiding Admiral's question as to why he desired to join the Senior Service by replying, with enthusiasm, 'Because, sir, a sailor has a wife in every port.' If that is a true statement, which as a heart-whole admirer of the Navy I take leave to doubt, then many who are at present wearing the uniform of the Army ought to be in the Senior Service. For not once, but many times, I have come across letters warm with affection and couched in endearing terms from the same gay philanderer to three or four, or even half a dozen different girls. Sometimes these letters are in almost identical terms; more than once they have been to young women living in the same town. I have a great admiration for the bravery of the British soldier, but a man like this is a cut above the ordinary military hero. He is a person of stupendous courage; and, like all other brave men, of simple faith, for he is relying absolutely on the chance that the busy censor does not make a mistake, and put the letter meant for Amy into the envelope addressed to Mary, or *vice versa*. He is also giving hostages to fortune, should, by any chance, the two young women get to know each other, and compare notes. Although I imagine I know a little feminine psychology, I am at a loss to tell whether in such circumstances they would fall upon each other with heated words, if not with iron fists, or whether they would combine to keep a specially lissom rod in pickle for this gay deceiver

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Practice

when he returns from the wars. He well deserves the worst they can do to him, for such a man is, wittingly or unwittingly, playing a low game. There would be no harm in such a correspondence were the letters nothing more than the friendly effusions of a lonely man to a handful of girl friends; but when he tells them severally that each of them is 'the only girl in the world' for him, it is, well—in the language of the Army, 'a bit thick.'

A fellow officer assures me that in one morning he censored nine letters—all breathing affection for nine separate girls—from the same man. I wonder if Shakespeare ever acted as a censor of letters, or whether his knowledge that 'men were deceivers ever' was evolved from his inner consciousness.

Sometimes there is artifice and self-seeking in a correspondence of this kind. An early experience of mine was to come across a most romantic letter from a soldier to a girl whom he did not know. It began 'Dear Friend,' and then went on to say that the writer was unknown to her, but had picked up a letter with her name and address in it on the battlefield, and was taking the liberty, which he trusted she would excuse, of writing to her. Now, an element of romance like this—the finding of a letter of her's on the battlefield by an unknown soldier—would naturally tend to excite the interest of any woman in her correspondent. He was an artist in guile, this youth, for he ended his epistle by saying, 'You will excuse my writing to you; but I am a lonely soldier, without any friends to write to me or send me cigarettes.' My interest was excited when, next day, I came across two other letters from the same industrious scribe to two other young women. He began in the same way, but pitched a somewhat different tale. In one case he told the young woman that he had found her photograph, with her name upon it, on the battlefield. And then he had the effrontery to say, 'I like your face.' If she had known as much about him as I was beginning to do she might have said, 'I like your cheek.' Both letters ended with the same plaintive statement about his loneliness, his lack of correspondence and of cigarettes.

I began to smell a rat, and carefully laid these letters aside to await developments. Rope being allowed him, he duly hanged himself next day, for in the pile of letters that awaited my scrutiny there were no less than four all from the same master-hand. In two he played the battlefield-letter dodge, in the third the photograph trick, but in the fourth he caught his neck in the noose. Practice had evidently emboldened him, for he wrote to the sister

of another patient in his own ward. He began as before, 'Dear friend,' and then proceeded to say that he had got her address from her brother, and was writing to her without his knowledge and hoped she would not let her brother know, &c., as he might not like it, because he was a brave fellow who believed in keeping his troubles to himself. But he felt she ought to know how ill her brother was: that he was completely paralysed in both legs, and could do practically nothing for himself, but that he waited on him hand and foot 'as one pal should on another.' And then he ended up this masterpiece of cruel and artful lying with the same mournful pleas about being a lonely soldier 'with nobody to write to me or send me cigarettes.' I think he must have imagined that his letters were censored by the padre, and not by the medical officer of his ward, or he would never have dared to give an entirely fictitious account of the girl's brother, who had nothing more seriously wrong with him than an attack of bronchitis.

I sent for this past-master in the art of the begging letter, and, after tackling him with his duplicity, and handing him six of his letters which he destroyed in my presence, I 'dressed him down' with as rough a tongue as I could muster. He professed contrition, and said he had only done it 'for a lark,' without meaning any harm. He informed me that he had procured the names and addresses of the girls to whom he indited his letters from other patients in the ward, some of whom, I imagine, were his accomplices in the attempted fraud. At heart I believe he was quite a good fellow—but with a somewhat unprincipled streak of romance in his constitution. In some walks of life—say company promoting—he would doubtless have attained to eminence.

I remember a curious, sour-faced soldier, in middle life, who wrote to his wife every day. He invariably began his epistle with the words:

'MY DARLING WIFE,

'I take up my pen in my hand to write you these few loving lines, hoping they will find you well, leaving me not so bad.'

And then followed the 'few loving lines' which consisted, day after day, of the most acrid and vituperative language he could command. There was evidently a lively domestic row in progress; but he ended each round as he invariably began the next with words of conventional affection. I wonder how this poor wife

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enjoyed 'the loving lines.' Unless she were hardened by custom they must sometimes have stung like a whip-lash.

Even the most casual scrutiny of the letters of the married men give one delightful peeps into the sunny atmosphere of happy homes. There is hope for the social life of England if its homes are pure, and these simple, cheerful, uncomplaining and heartening letters show that at bottom the family life of England is all right. The men display a fine tenderness and affection for their children. Usually they mention each by name and send some particular little individual message, and invariably the letter ends with an inverted pyramid of crosses, which, I understand, represent kisses. Opposite each line is placed the name of the recipient. Mother, of course, comes first—hers is the longest line; then Mary, with a line a little shorter, and Susie and George, each in diminishing quantity until the apex of the pyramid is reached, and two are found there for Baby. One can imagine the fond mother picking up her mites one by one, and showing them the crosses that stand for daddy's kisses, and then, with a beating heart, converting these symbols into the warm coin of the realm of love. That the children are jealous of their rights is shown from a sentence I remember from one letter. Evidently Father had, like a man, forgotten that Mary was older than Susie, and had sent the latter two more kisses than the former; and there had been sore trouble and a very wounded heart in the little home in Blighty. And, when in due course, this offence was pointed out to daddy, he wrote, 'I am sorry I forgot, and sent two more kisses for Susie than for Mary. I must be more careful. I am sending Mary two extra ones this time.' And there they were—throwing the pyramid a little out of drawing, but meaning so much to a little child somewhere in the homeland.

Letters are the one strong link that keep the affections of a soldier abroad riveted to his home. The links are golden, but they are firm as steel.

Sometimes one dips right into the middle of a heated correspondence between two men, and one can see the sword flash, and hear the clatter of blade on blade. Or, again, one is reminded that the ranks of the Army contain the pick of the intellect of the country. I have come across, and read with profound interest, a long and carefully thought out argument for the existence of God, written by a man who is at present an ordinary soldier, to a friend who was apparently uncertain of what to believe. Written, as this

must have been, away from all books of reference, it was a *tour de force*, and revealed the remarkable powers of logical reasoning possessed by its writer. I should have liked to discover his identity, but his letter gave no clue to that, as the whole signature it boasted was an Initial. But the recipient would know.

Love's fire burns brightly in spite of all the horrors of war, and, as a majority of our soldiers are young unmarried men our daily post-bag contains many letters to their sweethearts. The old, old tale is told in a thousand ways. No military secrets ever find their way into these missives, so let us pass them by, and refrain from thrusting rude fingers into these little nests of fledgling hopes.

I have had Fijian letters to censor, but that language is to me a closed book; they were handed on to an officer of the Fijian battalion.

But the letters of the British West Indian soldiers are among the most amusing I have met with. These West Indian negroes are a curious mixture of child and man. Some of them are very well educated, and can write remarkably good letters. Where the education has been limited or defective their letters are, to say the least of it, quaint. The writers show a passionate love for big words which they cannot spell, and whose meaning they do not quite understand. They frequently succeed in achieving a picturesque novelty of phrase. They tend to be flowery, and they sprinkle their epistles over with half-remembered verses of hymns, or inappropriate and inapposite texts from the Bible in careless profusion. And, sometimes, they spin wonderful yarns of the dangers they have come through before they have even been within sound of the guns.

In winter-time a regiment landed in the North of France and travelled by rail several hundred miles through country covered with snow. One of them, writing to his father, said, 'I saw the snow. It was very white. I walked in it.' He had!—or he would not have come under my care. With many more of his fellows, he had taken off boots and stockings and jumped into the snow at a railway-siding to see what it was like. Pardonable curiosity; but it meant frost-bitten feet. And then, with that curious, inconsequential religiosity which is the breath of their nostrils, he added, 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' Once they had seen it, snow interested them greatly, and they made many references to it in their letters. Evidently they desired

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to impress upon their friends at home the fact that they were having unique experiences ; but, as in the case of their references to shot and shell, their statements about the snow were not always accurate. On a particularly hot day, when most of us were gasping for breath, one of them wrote : ' Dear Brother, it is very cold here ; it is snowing hard to-day.'

One man wrote to his wife, and addressed her as ' Most political and perlite Mrs.' He was obviously a diplomatist, and will go far.

Another, writing to his clergyman at home—long before he had been anywhere near the fighting line—said : ' And all us B.W.I. regimens are fighting hard amid shot an' shell for the King of kings. But, thank God, we'll soon be entering the Hallelujah Harbour : Amen.'

Another, with unintentional humour, wrote : ' And the Lord looked down upon me, and the doctor drew water out of my knee.'

They love the flowery phrase : ' basking' is a pet word of theirs, but it hardly seems in its right place here :

' DEAR FRIEND,

' I hope this line finds you as it leaves me basking in the Shadow of Death.'

They are comprehensive in their greetings to their friends, every letter containing three or four lines of messages such as, ' Say howdie ¹ to my Granny and my Aunt Silvia and Uncle John William ; and howdie to my Cousin Tom, and howdie to Jack Smith and Mary, and howdie a plenty to all my friends.'

But one careful man, not too prodigal with his affections, writing to his father, said, ' Give my love to all who are worthy of it.' He was more general in his affection, though less lavish of it, than the man who wrote, ' Kisses for you, my dear sweet child, five thousand.'

The following is a representative specimen given me by a colleague. As the reference to the doctor applies to him, I do not hesitate to reproduce it. It is true :—

To Mrs. Smith, Esqre.

' DEAR MRS. SMITH,

' I'm trusting that the arriving of my few lines to your loving hand may meet the home circle enjoying health, not as it leaves me at present, sick with chest. This is to inform you that I arrive safe and had a fine time on rout to France. I had

¹ Probably a corruption of ' Howdy do !'

three days then travelling by train to my destination in line. [He had not yet been near the line.] Experiences I had of various places and how nice the French people are. Well, the hospital which I'm into the nurses are very nice and kind too expressly to the B.W.I. I has a very kind-hearted doctor. I likes him very much for his ways.'

One memory remains clearly imprinted upon one's mind amid the cloud of general impressions that one carries away from the censor's duty, and that is of the indomitable cheerfulness of the British soldier. His spirits are like a strong steel spring which recovers rapidly from any strain or stress, and which no ordinary calamity can break. He may grouse a bit—who wouldn't under similar conditions?—but behind all his grouching there is a smile, and, whether he will or no, that smile keeps breaking into his letters.

On the battle-field he has shown the grit that is in him, but in his letters he unconsciously lets one peep into his soul. And the sight of the things there may well make us proud of our fellow-countrymen.

R. W. MACKENNA.

SKI TOURS WITH THE BRITISH INTERNED.

THE HIGH ALPS IN SPRING.

I.

MANY years ago I fell off a mountain, but time inures one to most things, even to short legs and open wounds, and I had almost forgotten that I was lame. I managed to struggle up mountains and to ski, and it was with something of a shock that I found myself classed as totally unfit after three attempts to convince an army doctor that I was reasonably active. After the third attempt, I came out to Switzerland, and my work in Switzerland brought me into close touch with British, French, Belgian, and Serbian officers and men. Of the internment I could write from many angles; for the moment, at least, I prefer to confine myself to that part of the internment which was most reminiscent of earlier happier days among the mountains. I hope that the incidental result of this article may, perhaps, be to induce other ski-runners to climb in spring, for, to British mountaineers and ski-runners, the mountains in May have been hitherto almost a closed book. Our experiences prove—at least, to those that shared them—that May, and even June, is the finest of all seasons for ski-runners and for mountaineers who desire glacier tours and peaks which are neither Grepons nor Brenva Mont Blancs.

II.

The winter begins at Mürren in October. Twice we had wonderful ski-ing in October, and twice we had excellent running right on to the end of May. I have played tennis on a south slope on May 12 and skied down to five thousand feet on a north slope the same evening, a wonderful run on excellent spring snow.

I knew that the winter would be long and I did my best to induce all ranks to ski. Many responded, but others preferred the lazy pleasure of taking the train to the Allmendhubel and sliding down on toboggans, an ignoble pastime. Some skated, the Canadians played ice hockey, and a few sank so low as to curl.

None the less, about seventy officers and men became keen runners. A wild Irishman amused himself (and us) by going over the big jump in the Egerthenthal his first day on ski. He seemed to imagine that ski-ing consisted solely in thirty-metre jumps. The rest were more easily satisfied. My wife and I soon taught them the rudiments, and before long parties of officers and other ranks used to go for long tours on ski together. A Prussian officer would have been shocked by the unofficial relations between officers and men, more reminiscent of peace time ski-ing parties than of military etiquette, and had he seen the senior officer of the garrison entering with three privates for the Third Class Ski Test, which was judged by two lieutenants, he would, perhaps, have argued that the seeds of the soviet were sown at Mürren.

So long as toboggan run and ice rink were open the garrison enjoyed life, but when the heavy snowfalls of March put an end to everything but ski-ing, the garrison voted the Alpine winter an overrated institution. But the elect were happy, and their aggressive joy in each new snowfall began to irritate the garrison. 'What good is ski-ing to the British working man?' observed a disgruntled Tommy as he watched a ski-ing party setting off. My attempts to make converts sometimes met with painful results. I once persuaded an arch-heretic to come out for a run and indiscreetly wound up with a little easy woodrunning, very amusing for a good runner, but (apparently) not at all amusing for my unwilling convert. We were halfway through the wood when I heard a loud crash and the tardy convert was discovered with his skis imprisoned in the low-lying branches of a tree and his head submerged in the snow. 'I say, Mr. Lunn,' he exclaimed, as he extricated himself, 'do you call this ski-ing? I call this——— birdsnesting.'

'If you miss the joy you miss all,' as Stevenson remarks, and the non-ski-ing majority certainly missed the joy. Towards the middle of May a corporal remarked to my small boy's nurse: 'See that bit of snow on that roof. Mr. Lunn is going to scrape it off to ski on and he'll be happy the whole afternoon.'

Then, too, the habits of the ski-ing minority were eccentric. It was observed that, even in midwinter, they always walked uphill, stripped to the waist, and that in spring they skied downhill in gaily-coloured bathing drawers and their boots. It may be remarked that this sunbathing produces the most wonderful results on the health of all concerned, but Tommy is conservative, and

the sudden vision of an 'officer and gentleman' flashing by almost naked grieved the N.C.O.'s of the old army. King's Regulations provide for most things, including side whiskers, but they do not indicate the correct salute that a nude officer, 'telemarking' down spring snow, has a right to expect.

Still more suspicious was the unsettling effect of the moon on our little ski-ing fraternity. The moon's relation to a certain unfortunate class is notorious, and the fact that the ski-runners invariably sallied forth after dinner when the moon was full confirmed the worst suspicions of the curlers. But the ski-runners did not mind. They knew that a man has not seen the full glory of the moon until he has been out among the Alpine snows when the gracious goddess reveals every curve in glaciers many miles away, every subtle grace of the snow, every wrinkle in the solemn, silent watchers across the valley,

'Brighter than is the silver Rhodope,
Fairer than whitest snow on Scythian hills.'

It was our custom to take a bottle of Swiss 'champagne' to the top of the 'Winteregg.' This we drank with appropriate toasts, and then began some fast and furious ski-ing, for no man skis half so well as when he has a couple of glasses of champagne, however cheap and unpleasant, within him. Perhaps the moon had something to say in the matter. Certainly, on those moonlight nights we skied faster than we ever did by day. There is no sensation finer than the sudden dive down a steep slope, soft and radiant and full of mystery, the mystery of the moon. There is a touch of uncertainty, a hint of unsuspected gradients in the white foreground that rushes up to meet you, so that a swift descent by moonlight has a thrill that one can never recapture by day. It is worth while turning round to watch your friends, dark silhouettes against the snow, as their ski swing round on a 'telemark.' A spurt of fiery silver marks the beginning of the movement, and, as they suddenly swing to rest, a wave of transparent foam, transfigured by the moon, falls slowly back on to a background of steady light. As a rule, our midnight expeditions were short, but once we went so far as to cross the Scheidegg to Grindelwald. That was on November 1. The snow was perfect and there was something curious in the sight of numberless dead autumn leaves lying on the surface of that perfect powder that one associates with December and January. But the Alpine winter is a long and relentless affair,

silvering the gold of autumn leaves and withdrawing reluctantly from the advancing guards of primula and gentian.

III.

In 1917 we carried out three very successful raids in the Oberland glaciers. At the end of April five officers, a private of the London Scottish, and a Canadian private, climbed the Mittagborn (12,779 feet) and crossed the Lötschenlücke. The snow was hard and difficult, but all my pupils skied and did excellent stemming turns and Christianias, what time the Mürren guides solemnly walked downhill. It is always amusing to show the professionals a clean pair of heels in the Alps, an experience to which their summer clientele has rarely accustomed them.

In June we returned again to the glaciers. The Jungfrau railway, which carries ski and ski-runner to a height of 11,400 feet, is an undisguised boon to the summer ski-runner. We found, as I had more or less expected from my recollections of a June ski tour on Monte Rosa, that the snow in June is far more reliable, and far better, than all save the very best winter snow. The reasons which had originally driven me to summer ski-ing were mainly personal. The descent of a big peak on foot causes me more pain than I can comfortably digest, but so long as I am on ski I am happy enough. Even a bad fall does not seriously worry me since I have invested in a surgical shield which protects my wound and the place where the two bones were joined together in a union which reminds me of certain unhappy marriages. Ski-ing is the sport for cripples, for one soon learns to make one's swings on the sound leg. Perhaps these lines will be read by a mountain lover who has been lamed in the war. Let him not despair. I could climb four thousand feet on ski before I could walk three miles on the flat. Ski-ing is an all-the-year-round sport. The Grepons and Drus may be denied you and a friendly pull on the rope may be useful on rocks where you were wont to lead, but much remains. The real treasures of the snow, the glory of glacier passes and snow summits, such as Monte Rosa, are still available. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to reply in greater detail to any mountaineer lamed in the war. A pretty expert knowledge of ski bindings and ski technique for 'game legs' is at the disposal of those unfortunate enough to need it.

But apart from personal and exceptional reasons, I soon learned

that the spring was an ideal season for mountaineering on ski. The drawback to glacier ski-ing in the winter, apart from the shortness of the days, the occasional severe cold, and the danger of falling into crevasses if one skis unroped, is the fact that good snow is exceptional in the High Alps. The wind is the great enemy to good snow, and the High Alps are, of course, exposed to constant winds which do not affect the more sheltered lower regions, so that the beautiful dry powder snow is soon converted into horrible crust. Now, for technical reasons which I have no space to explain, crust formed by the spring sun yields wonderful ski-ing, and the crust found in spring is formed by the sun—for the wind cannot affect snow which has once been thawed by the spring sun and refrozen at night. The reader must take it on trust that glacier ski-ing in winter is often difficult and unpleasant, but that in fine, cloudless weather, glacier ski-ing in May and June, provided, of course, one is experienced enough to choose the right hour at which to descend—is about as good as ski-ing can be. 'Firm crust' and 'perforated crust,' which are peculiar to May and June, yield a ski-ing surface as fast, as safe, and as easy as any snow that falls in winter. Good running is a certainty in May during good weather, but highly problematic on the glaciers in winter.

IV.

I pass hurriedly over our ski expeditions in 1917, for I shall need all my available space to describe the finest mountain expedition that I have ever had the luck to enjoy—four days in the Oberland glaciers in May, 1918.

Briefly, then, in both June and July, 1917, we carried through very successful tours. In early June we crossed the Grünhornlücke and climbed the Galmihorn (11,562 feet). On June 4 my friends left me. They went in one day from the Oberaarhorn hut, across the Grünhornlücke and Lotschenlücke, to Kippel in the Lotschenthal. On the same day, I ran down to the Grimsel, crossed the Naglisgratli, climbed the Galenstock (11,801 feet), and ran down to the hotel on the Furka, walking thence to Gletsch. Between dawn and sunset our two parties crossed the Oberland at its longest length, crossed the Rhône glacier and climbed the Galenstock. As there was not a single member of either party—excepting the guides—who was not handicapped by some more or less serious

physical defect, this speaks volumes for the usefulness of summer ski-ing. Indeed, I am sure that a party on foot could not possibly have covered the distance of either tour without borrowing many hours from the night, whereas our two journeys were both done by daylight.

A few days later I made the first ski ascent of the Dom, which is the highest mountain wholly in Switzerland. We took our ski to the actual summit and started the run down from the summit. The first two hundred feet was very steep and we had to run in the tracks made on the ascent. It was rather unorthodox ski-ing, but a pedantic desire to start our run from the roof of the Swiss Alps explained this departure from sound traditions. We took forty minutes from the Dom to the Festi hut, a descent of over 5,000 feet. This excluding a halt for lunch on the rocks of the Festijoch.

In July we wound up the ski-ing season with a couple of Oberland snow peaks (Ebnefluh and Galmihorn) and a snow pass. We had planned to stay a week among the glaciers, but rain cut short our stay. We sent up a week's provisions by train to the Jungfrau-joch—modern mountaineering—and thence down to the Concordia on a sleigh. A Swiss climber asked me, with all apparent seriousness, whether the more energetic English were to be interned at the Concordia for the summer.

The ski-ing was excellent throughout. Indeed, there are few snow peaks which do not afford capital running in every month of the year. I, at least, have enjoyed first-class ski-ing in *every month* of the year. Alpine huts will soon be provided with ski, and the spectacle of a climber walking up Monte Rosa on foot will provoke the good-humoured sympathy which is to-day evoked by an old print depicting mountaineers ascending Mont Blanc in top hats. For my part, I would far rather climb Mont Blanc in a top hat with ski than in a soft hat without ski.

V.

Most of the officers were repatriated in the autumn, but to my selfish joy my three ski-ing friends were rejected. We spent the winter poring over maps, and on May 17, 1918, we met at Inter-laken from divers corners of Switzerland. My friends, Carlyon, Evans, and Middleditch, had left most of their belongings at Mürren. Knubel, greatest of cragsmen and most delightful of companions,

had to be collected from the Valais, porters had to be gathered together from Mürren and Wengen, and the entire Ski-ing Corps had to be mobilised to catch a special train specially ordered. The mobilisation was entrusted to me with many misgivings and many prophecies that I would leave all the vital things behind, but even my cynical and critical friends had to allow me a good mark when ski, guides, porters, provisions, all arrived at the appointed place and at the appointed time.

We slept that night at the Jungfrauoch and left at 4.30 next morning for the Mönchjoch (11,871 feet). It had snowed in the night, a lucky accident, for though we could count with certainty on the wonderful spring snow, yet this unexpected gift of dry winter 'powder' was something we had no right to expect. None of us will forget the soft, velvet feel of the snow as we dived down from the pass on to the 'urns of silent snow' which feed the greatest icestream in Europe. If there is a finer running surface than two inches of dry powder on crust, I, for one, have never met it.

We halted at the Concordia platz to fix up our ski. In spring one climbs on foot, dragging the ski behind one on string—a very easy and effortless method. In winter, one climbs on ski, zig-zagging up deep soft snow. No contrast could be greater.

As we neared the summit of our pass, a sudden intrusion of sound invaded the solemn silence of the snows. We looked up. Against the blue depths of an Alpine sky a solitary aeroplane circled slowly and then swooped past the Jungfrau out of sight. There was a hint of arrogant challenge in this swift invasion, a token of the final defeat of the Alps, a forecast of the days when even the most sacred and remote of mountain shrines will be liable to sudden disturbance from crowded aerobuses. The thought saddened us. We felt like the last survivors of a disappearing race, the race of men who climbed on foot.

⁶We ran down from the Grünhornlücke to the Walliser Fiescherfirn, and braced ourselves for the last tug up to the Finsteraarhorn hut. It was now midday and the heat was something more intense than anything I have ever experienced. The dazzling glare of the May glaciers passes understanding. Two pairs of dark spectacles hardly suffice to prevent snowblindness. If an inch of one's skin is left unprotected by clothes or by thick layers of grease, it shrivels up like a dry leaf under a magnifying glass. Shelter there is none, save under rocks that actually overhang, for the

sun seems to be vertically overhead. This horrible heat and glare is the one drawback to May ski-ing; it can be avoided by making an extra early start.

On the 19th we climbed the Hinter Fiescherhorn (13,190 feet) and the Ochsenhorn. The climb was a typical spring ascent. We walked up on hard snow as easily as in summer, and far more comfortably. We stripped to the waist till the sun's rays rendered this unsafe. We took our ski to within 150 feet of the summit and enjoyed a gorgeous run home. Deep winter powder on the summit slope and perfect spring crust below. The icefall, which is such a formidable obstacle in winter, was securely bridged. In winter ski have to be removed for the icefall; we were able to 'telemark' in and out between the crevasses. There are few things more thrilling than a series of linked 'telemarks' within a yard or less of the upper lip of a deep crevasse. The snow was perfect and safe and the inch or so of superficial softening enabled one to place one's 'telemarks' with great accuracy. We ran down some 2,500 feet of interesting, but intricate, running in twenty minutes.

On the 20th we crossed the Gemsücke (10,924 feet), the Oberaarjoch, and reascended from the Unteraar alp along the Unteraar glacier to the Dolfuss hut (7,851 feet).

A perfect day. Two memories stand out among a wealth of good moments. The first was our descent from the Oberaarjoch. The guides and porters, heavily laden, took a short cut over the Scheuzerjoch, but I did not want my friends to miss the most perfect ski-ing glacier in the Alps. I remembered a divine run just as the sun was rising in June, and another descent of this same pass in January. May, I somehow felt, would yield an even better memory.

At 8 A.M. I put back my watch and aneroid into my pocket, gave a final hitch to my sack, and started. We led off cautiously till we had located the bergschrund (the crevasse that guards the summit of most passes), and then let our ski have their head. The summit slopes are concave in form, like a shallow funnel cut in two, an ideal shape for ski-running. We swept from side to side, running across the central dip of the slopes, and using the banks to turn on, just as a cyclist runs up a banked turn of a racing track. Long, linked Christianias followed in swift, bewildering succession. As our ski swung round on a curve, the soft, superficial film of ice fell away from the underlying crust and rippled down the slope

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like the soft splash of a gentle glacier stream. One heard the continuous rustle of the snow, as an underlying melody faintly discerned in the stronger music of the wind. Near the end of the steeper slopes we set our ski for a straight run. On that wonderful 'film crust' we knew that we could not fall. Our ski bounded forward and their points quivered and thrilled at the touch of the undulating snow. We crouched down, every muscle braced; the wind roared its last pæan in our ears, and too soon, all too soon, the steeper slopes relented into a long, unchanging gradient. The wind seemed to drop suddenly. Four simultaneous swings and four breathless runners found themselves facing the slope whose swift joy they had squandered all too soon. We threw ourselves on the snow and looked up at our pass. We had run down nearly two thousand feet in just under five minutes. A slope that would have taken two hours to climb had been concentrated into a few exquisite moments of excitement. We looked up at our tracks with sorrow, sorrow that is inseparable from ski-ing, regret that life's most perfect moments are all too miserably brief. We had skied together for many, many months, and this was one of those days when the four of us were all ski-ing on the top of our form. There is a peculiar pleasure in doing something delightful, not as an individual but as a member of a team, a pleasure that is multiplied when you know your friend's ski-ing as thoroughly as you know his jokes, his best swing as well as you know his virtues, his weaker turns as completely as you know his vices. Solos have their charm, but there is a ski-ing joy which is known only to a quartette of friends, all of whom are moving well together, placing their swings at the right moment and neither overrunning the man in front nor impeding the man behind.

Glacier running has a charm all its own. On these long, unchanging gradients one often loses all sense of personal motion. It is the foreground that rushes up to meet you, and your ski seem like a narrow skiff anchored in midstream, a slender boat that sways gently as the torrent sweeps round the bows. The illusion is emphasised by the gentle, wave-like undulations of the snow. When the speed decreases you feel that the hills are assuming a sedate measure. The magic network of dancing shadow and fugitive light sobers into separate and successive ridges of snow. The wind that thunders in one's heart dies away into a fitful breeze. The snow in front of the ski hunches itself together and seems to thrust the ski backwards. Suddenly, the world seems to give a

little jerk; the mountains stop moving, and you know that you are a creeping thing once more.

VI.

We left the Dolfuss at 3.10 A.M. on the morning of the 21st. We left it with sadness, for we had spent perhaps the most exquisite afternoon of my life, lying half naked on the gentian-sprinkled turf and listening to spring's own divine music, a little frost-freed stream near by.

We wandered up the long, gentle highway of the Unteraar glacier while the great icewall of the Schreckhorn went through the slow movements of the dawn. During most of our journey our pass was visible, a tantalising curve slung between the Bergli-stock and Nassihorn. At last, the slopes steepened; the level glacier was left below; the bergschrund that guards the last approach was crossed. Here we left our ski to be dragged up on string, for the final two hundred feet steepens from forty to sixty degrees. The Lauteraarsattel is, indeed, an ideal pass, unlike some meandering watersheds, where the hills beyond drift casually into view. Not so on the Lauteraarsattel, where the beauty disclosed from the skyline is sudden and dramatic in its swift invasion. And the Lauteraar was to prove, not only the watershed between two glacier valleys, but the dividing line between two climates. We had lived for four days among the glaciers, and, save for a touch of colour at the Dolfuss, we had seen little but dazzling expanses of white glacier and bleak, dark cliffs. Winter is never so visibly queen of the High Alps as in the month that sees her final defeat, for the soft, damp snow of May finds a purchase and a resting place on ice and rock, from which the dry powder of winter is torn off in long streamers by the first great wind. We had toiled for six hours up one of the most secluded ice valleys of the Alps and only the rose of dawn and the gentian sky had relieved the monotone of black and white. The last few minutes emphasised the prevailing note. One climbed up that steep snow-wall with one's nose almost buried in the snow, with one's horizon of view limited to a few square feet in front of one's forehead. Suddenly one thrust one's arms through the cornice where Knubel's axe had broken a welcome breach—a last struggle—a breathless effort—and one had burst the prison gates.

We looked down from the Lauteraarsattel on the sudden glory

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of Grindelwald in the spring. We gazed on another world, another climate, another season. It is contrast, and contrast only, that brings home the miracle of May. Many years ago I came home from the parched brown of the Greek hills, and, as the train carried me through the wonderful green of Sussex fields in their April freshness, I saw something which I had had to leave England to discover. So in the Alps, if you live in the valleys the gradual oncoming of May softens the surprise of her beauty, but the mountaineer, who has lived for days among the heat and radiant glare of the May glaciers and then suddenly reaches some kindly window looking out from the mountain fortress on to the world of men, discovers with surprise that the commonplace fields seem transfigured, that their greenness is incredibly different. There is a suggestion of transparency about it, as if those distant alps and pastures had been painted on to glass through which the sun was shining. The effect is intensified by the contrast with the snowy peaks in the immediate foreground, and on the Lauteraarsattel the greenness of Hertenbühl and Grindelalp was thrown into even bolder relief by a perfect waterfall, born in the Bach Alp See, a splash of chinese white against an emerald background.

From the Lauteraarsattel a long and hot traverse under the cliffs of the Berglistock brought us to the window of the Rosenegg (11,480 feet) that looks on to the lonely Gauli glacier. Here we rested and then started for the Rosenhorn, the third peak of the triple-crested Wetterhörner. We went on ski to a point about 500 feet below the summit, and then, leaving ski, rucksacks, coats, and waistcoats, sauntered along the easy ridge to the summit. The view, like the view from the Wetterhorn proper, is singularly beautiful, far more impressive than the views from even higher peaks. We saw it to perfection.

At 4.10 we had rejoined our ski. We ran down the Wetterkessel which, in its aloof secrecy, reminded one of the Plaine Morte. The summit curtain of the Rosenlauri glacier was rather troublesome, but below the big icefall we had some pleasant skiing to the point where the summer path reaches the glacier. Here, at a height of about 5,800 feet, we removed our ski and tramped down the woody path to Rosenlauri. In May it is the glaciers that are hot and the lower snowless slopes that are often delightfully cool. The chill of snowfed streams was wonderfully refreshing and the restful greens were doubly welcome to eyes that had been sheltered for days by the darkest of dark spectacles.

An open meadow among pines suggested a halt. We threw ourselves down and fumbled for pipe and tobacco, and then abandoned mind and body to the perfect reaction of repose. It was a spot worth halting at. In the foreground marsh marigolds,—a sheet of flame—fought against the twilight. Near by a cataract thundered down with the impetuous energy of a busy worker burning to recapture the months lost in the enforced truce of winter. A hundred streams meet above Rosenlauri, each with her own distinctive tune. To the tired company of ski-runners there was something wonderfully soothing in the chorus of song with which spring makes music in the hills. Running water is always beautiful, but it is only in the mountains of May that you fully realise the magic of the oldest music in the world.

Our ski seemed oddly out of place in this intimate shrine where every sound and every visible thing proclaimed the great Resurrection of May. The soft, yet firm, touch of the turf, the scent of the pines, the taste of spring-burdened breezes, the serenade of the streams, and the colour scheme, ranging through a thousand tints,—such was the feast of five senses with which May welcomed her prodigals returning from the country of unending winter.

The ski-runner, for whom the mountains are something more than a racing track, will often regretfully sigh for the colour and the distinctive sounds of summer, green alps and running streams, and when the summer returns he will recall with even keener longing the thrill which is born of the marriage of snow and ski. In May, he can taste, within the span of a few short hours, the intangible beauty of the most perfect motion known to man and the visible beauty that finds perfect expression in the flower companies that follow the feet of the spring, the feet that are beautiful upon the mountains, seeing that they bring the good tidings of Resurrection.

We reached Meiringen at 11 P.M. We had been on the march for twenty hours and we were very, very tired. But not even the purgatory of that last hour on a stony bridle path—two members of our quartette owned short and lame legs—could mar the memory of the most perfect day that I have ever spent among the mountains.

All the conditions had been exactly right—the right friends, cloudless weather, perfect ski-ing, and an insight into the loveliness of mountain form such as no other Alpine wandering has given me.

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Those that were with me have separated far and wide, but a letter from one of them lies before me as I write :

'I am very certain that I shall never enjoy anything more than our various ski trips together. Perhaps we shall get together for another run when we have gone over "to the other side," as Lodge puts it. We shall never get all the conditions right again in this life.'

Perhaps not. May will always be May, but time and tide will scarcely bring together again the four friends that linked their 'Christianias' down the snows of the Oberaar. These perfect things do not repeat themselves exactly. If, however, the attempt to recapture some faint hint of those glorious days induces a single reader to visit the High Alps in May, these lines will not have been written in vain.

ARNOLD LUNN.

'AGAMEMNON' AT OXFORD.

DURING a visit to Cambridge some years ago, talk after dinner falling into a discussion of recent performances of Greek plays, the late Mr. J. W. Clark urged me to put on paper my recollections of the pioneer performance of the 'Agamemnon' at Oxford in 1880.

Alas! that the doing so has been delayed till too late to give pleasure to him who suggested it. But even so, there is so much that is characteristic of Oxford about the tale that it may yet be worth the telling before it is all forgotten.

There was not in those days at Oxford any society corresponding to the long established A.D.C. at Cambridge, but at New College, and no doubt elsewhere, there was a diligent Shakespeare reading society, and at their meetings my brother, F. R. Benson, generally read the chief female parts, as he had previously done at school at Winchester. The Winchester society was chiefly inspired by one of the masters, the Rev. C. H. Hawkins, who, besides being a keen musician, was full of the traditions of Early Victorian play-going. Somewhat before our time he had even carried through in successive years school performances of the 'Merchant of Venice,' 'Hamlet,' 'Macbeth,' and 'King Lear,' but for reasons¹ as to which school-boy memories were silent, subsequent dramatic efforts had subsided into the less exciting form of readings, which courted no publicity. However that may have been, Mr. Hawkins was the first of those who from time to time handed on to my brother touches of the older tradition and experience, so that for many years afterwards it was easy to recognise in his acting and that of his associates the influence of the kindly and enthusiastic teacher.

On May 1, 1880, having to read a paper to a small artistic society founded by Rennell Rodd, the winner of the Newdigate, I spent the week end with my brother at Oxford, and heard how, a few days earlier, when discussing the course of Shakespeare reading for the term, M. C. Bickersteth had remarked, 'Why not have an "Agamemnon" reading?' From which arose the question, put by my brother to his particular friend, W. N. Bruce of Balliol, 'Why not *act* the "Agamemnon"?' I fear that neither my brother nor I were profound students of Aeschylus; but a careful

See *A History of Winchester School*, by A. F. Leach.

perusal of the argument prefixed to the play convinced us that the thing was possible; and the next two days were spent in hunting out the nucleus of the cast and seeking advice of the learned. Firstly of A. O. Prickard, whose fine taste then and throughout was with characteristic self-effacement devoted to the interpretation of the text. The fastidious Pater, overtaken in the 'Broad' by the protagonists, yielded an unexpected blessing; but rumour has it that D. B. Monro scouted the idea as 'blasphemous puerility.' Be it observed that the first call was made upon the athletic club—it was only when it came to recruiting the chorus that the claims of distinguished scholarship were considered.

Bruce had represented the University against Cambridge in the quarter-mile; Lawrence was a superlative performer over hurdles, whose fame may be read of in the appropriate volume of the Badminton Library; and F. R. Benson was the three-mile runner of those years. Fort and Dunn, though not attaining the coveted 'blue,' were members of the same strenuous group of intimates; and if the only don in the cast may be counted an exception, I imagine that his inclusion should be attributed rather to a reputed acquaintance with dramatic conditions than directly to his very real classical attainments.

As finally completed the cast reads as follows:

THE 'AGAMEMNON' OF AESCHYLUS.

Watchman: Mr. W. L. Courtney, New College.

Clytemnestra: Mr. F. R. Benson, New College.

Herald: Mr. J. A. Fort, New College.

Agamemnon: Mr. W. N. Bruce, Balliol.

Cassandra: Mr. G. Lawrence, C.C.C.

Aegisthus: Mr. H. A. C. Dunn, New College.

Chorus of Argive Elders.

Mr. A. O. Perkins, New College. Mr. M. T. Tatham, Balliol.

Mr. A. M. Mackinnon, Balliol. Mr. C. Lowry, C.C.C.

Mr. W. S. Eastwood, New College. Mr. L. Huxley, Balliol.

Mr. R. R. Farrant, New College. Mr. J. W. Mackail, Balliol.

Mr. E. W. Huntingford, Merton. Mr. F. A. Ker, New College.

Mr. J. R. Rodd, Balliol. Mr. J. T. A. Haines, Balliol.

Mr. M. C. Bickersteth, New College. Mr. S. Pickering, Balliol.

Mr. T. R. Walrond, Balliol.

Chorodidaskalos: Mr. A. Bradley, Balliol.

Composer of Music: Mr. W. Farratt, Magdalen.

Committee.

Mr. W. N. Bruce, Balliol.

Mr. W. L. Courtney, New College.

Mr. C. Lowry, C.C.C.

Mr. M. C. Bickersteth, New College.

Manager : Mr. F. R. Benson, New College.*Architect* : Mr. W. A. S. Benson, New College.*Scene Painters* : Messrs. J. R. Rodd, Balliol ; A. S. Ryle, New College.*Stage Carpenter* : J. Shelton.

Meantime Bruce made application to Dr. Jowett, the Master of Balliol, for the use of the college hall for a performance of the 'Agamemnon,' and obtained consent on giving satisfactory answers to two highly characteristic questions: 'Can you do it well?' 'Can you do it cheaply?'

Classical archaeology was not in 1880 among the strong points of Oxford study, nor in any case could a quasi-Gothic college hall have lent itself to any attempt to reproduce the conditions of the Greek theatre. The Bradfield chalk-pit converted at a later date into a classic theatre was an experiment of quite a different type.

Our intent was merely to provide what was necessary to the action of the play—an upper stage for the chief actors, a lower stage for the chorus, with three entrances, and a practicable roof to the palace of the Atridae, which was crudely indicated by the back scene. A rough scheme of all this was put into the hands of a local stage carpenter, and the painting turned over to two of the above-mentioned artistic society when I was again at Oxford on the following Saturday, May 8—not four weeks before the first performance, which indeed took place within six weeks from the first mention of the idea.

Sir W. B. Richmond, then Slade professor at Oxford, came to the aid of our undergraduate scene painters, contributing a brilliant sketch of the chariot of the sun in the central pediment of the palace. It is true, that it was distinctly late in style and not altogether congruent with the lions of Mycenae, none too skilfully enlarged from the woodcuts in a school history of Greece, which surmounted the side entrances, and excited the derision of archaeologists.

But a glance at Donaldson's history of the Greek drama suffices to-day, as it did then, to show that archaeological correctness would

have been ridiculously impossible, and would plainly have been as foreign to the outlook of Aeschylus, who was not at pains to distinguish between Argos and Mycenae, as we know it was to that of Shakespeare. The most that could be attempted was a general suggestion of Hellenism and avoidance of such aggressive modernisms as would distract attention from the power of the poetic structure of the drama.

In the middle of the stage stood the altar, the necessary focus of the action. But we made it serve an additional purpose; for it was hollow, and open on the side away from the audience, with intent that the prompter should sit therein, at the point most convenient for the actors.

When the carpentry was complete there remained at the back the great Gothic window in the east gable of the hall, and a sky-cloth was needed to obscure this. No facilities being available for painting anything so large, it was just spread out on the grass of the quadrangle and dusted with blue verditer, the whole stock of the nearest colourman being impressed for the purpose, and powdered whiting was used for the clouds, swept in with a garden broom. I have still the vision of Rennell Rodd in a white flannel shirt, worn smock fashion as a protection to his other clothes, manipulating the broom, and of the wonderful peacock hue that the grass was dyed by the verditer. The blue sky and the golden orange hangings between the columns of the palace front were the only positive colours in the scene, till Clytemnestra drew aside the curtains at the last and revealed the bright purple draperies of the inner chamber; all the rest was the subdued white of the marble architecture, contrary to the then accepted canons of scene painting, which decreed that acting should take place against dark and neutral tinted backgrounds.

In the dresses there was no lack of gay colours. Richmond and Burne-Jones had expounded to us the theory of the normal Greek dress, and a sufficient supply of harmoniously coloured materials having been obtained, they were sorted into a number of heaps on the floor corresponding to the order of the chorus, which done, the Argive elders marched in and each carried off his own little lot of drapery, a primitive but quite effective method of securing a balanced scheme of colour.

That in those days Balliol was a nest of singing birds has since been a familiar statement, and certainly they were well represented in the chorus, and on the list were two winners of the Newdigate,

two future professors of poetry in the University. But this sort of singing bird does not in our times necessarily pretend to a trained voice, or any sense of song in the musician's acceptation, and, as it happened, the chorus was not distinguished for proficiency in these respects. So the work of the composer was subject to rigid limitations when it came to composing the music and training the singers within four short weeks of a busy summer term. It was the present master of the King's music, Sir Walter Parratt, then organist of Magdalen College, in whom centred most that was vital in Oxford music, who with characteristic energy undertook the task. Fortunately he found a friend at hand to guide him through the rhythmic perplexities of the chorus, in the present President of Corpus, better known to us then as the brilliant cricketer of a few years back, 'Tommy Case,' than for his scholastic distinction and attainments as a musical amateur.

That ecclesiastical tradition had in Gregorian chants handed down to us something of lineal descent from ancient Greece was a safe starting-point, which would ensure the touch of archaistic feeling so eminently desirable. If the voices could be supported by flutes and reeds great would be the gain; but this was found impracticable, so the musical treatment was perforce limited to an extreme simplicity. Like limitations were imposed on the evolutions of the chorus, and the want of space on the narrow stage might well have curbed the genius of the old Athenian who gained fame by inventions of beautiful intricacies of dance. Besides, could we be sure how far it was permitted to Argive elders to dance rather than drill?

In short, in music as in every respect, the one aim was not scientific research, but the most direct utilisation of available means to the production of an aesthetic effect.

We know far less of the ritual of music and drill signified by the title 'a song of degrees' in the Psalms than we do of Greek stage management; but no one who had heard Walter Parratt accompanying the Psalms could doubt that he would give some help in the appreciation of a Greek chorus, and such details as the fact that the degrees of our stage were but two or three, while a dozen steps or so intervened between stage and orchestra at Athens, we perforce had to ignore.

In addition to discharging the function of chorodidaskalos, or trainer of the chorus, Mr. Andrew Bradley had made it very easy for the unlearned to follow the course of the play by a

particularly lucid synopsis, a foretaste of that discerning clarity of style which in after years made his lectures as professor of poetry so remarkably attractive. It was not till the very last days of rehearsal that the setting of the final chorus was completed, and the simple chants being perhaps less easy for unmusical ears to memorise than a catchy tune, the chorus required, alas! some instrumental support, so that the horrid modernism of a few notes on a piano was a hazardous necessity, followed as they were by another anachronistic sound, the striking of a safety match behind the scenes to light the beacon fire, which the watchman on the roof of the palace hails as portending the return of Agamemnon. For myself I had little fear that the humorous would prevail, for returning to Oxford in time to see only the final rehearsals, full, no doubt, of the imperfections characteristic of amateur rehearsals, I had felt the solemn beauty and overwhelming power of the play far surpass all expectation; and, after long years, can still recover in memory something of the thrill produced by the marching chant of the entering chorus, in spite of the depressing conditions of a rehearsal.

And when evening came and brought a full house it was at once apparent that the audience had no more inclination to strain at archaeological gnats than would be brought to a performance of 'Israel in Egypt' or 'Judas Maccabaeus,' oratorios which in structural form are very near relations of the Aeschylean drama. True, that in them the ear has attained a disproportionate predominance over the eye, but the essential balance between protagonist and chorus none the less dominates the construction.

Though scholars had, of course, always appreciated the poetic beauty of the choral songs, it was a matter of common consent that the dramatic power and integral propriety of the chorus in the acted play came as a revelation to the most imaginative. Even in the preliminary stages of work upon the idea of a performance it became evident that the choruses were of essential fitness, and not a mere series of interludes mainly historical in interest.

We learnt once more what is lost in mere reading by which the eyes assume the function of the ears, thereby abdicating their own function. How much discussion of the inner meaning of 'Hamlet' would have been spared, or at least differently oriented, if the disputants had been familiar with seeing and hearing the play acted without material cuts?

But I have before me better witness than the timeworn memories

of a watcher from behind the scene, in an article written by Andrew Lang, who records how, when the audience had seated themselves and recognised in the scene the palace of the Atreidae,

'A tall and portly armed man (Mr. W. L. Courtney) crosses the stage and presently appears on the roof of the palace, where he lies down with his head on his hands. This is the sentinel whom Clytemnestra has set to watch for the beacon fire.

' . . . His joy at the first flash of the beacon was humorously expressed. The audience had scarcely ceased to applaud Mr. Courtney when the chorus entered, fifteen in number. Their rhythmic movement, their beautiful dress, the solemnity of the song in which they bewailed the Trojan war and the sacrifice of Iphigenia, were surprisingly impressive. For the first time one seemed to understand the nature of the chorus and to appreciate the power of this admirable instrument of dramatic art. As they sing, Clytemnestra, "a daughter of the gods, divinely tall," enters from the palace.

'The part was played by Mr. F. R. Benson of New College. His success was little short of extraordinary. Draped in white, the daughter of the swan seemed to tower over the chorus, dominating them from the height of her pride and passion.

' . . . Mr. Benson's clear and sustained elocution, the grace of his gestures, and towards the close his changeful emotions were truly admirable. Clytemnestra is questioned by the chorus and announces the capture of Ilium. After her tirade, excellently delivered, the chorus sing a hymn to Zeus. In the hymn the accent of religious reverence was given with singular effectiveness, especially the passage where the chorus doubt whether Zeus be indeed the name of the true god whom they ignorantly worship.

'A kind of thrill went through the audience as those strange words were reverently pronounced; one seemed near the solemn secret of Greek religion, which is so much concealed from us by the light fables and fancies of poetry and mythology . . .

' . . . Perhaps from schoolboy memories of difficult passages we think of the chorus as a bore; but the Balliol chorus redeemed the character of the profession. Their grunt of disapproval when Clytemnestra boasted of her fidelity was highly humorous. But we are keeping Agamemnon (Mr. W. N. Bruce of Balliol) with Cassandra (Mr. G. Lawrence of Corpus) waiting in their car. The entrance of Agamemnon was not very successfully managed; a chariot and horses could not be got into the hall. . . . thus the long speech which Agamemnon is supposed to deliver from the chariot Mr. Bruce spoke from the doorway . . . and was only really visible for the brief moment when he stepped across the

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stage. . . . The part of Cassandra, played with great applause by Mr. Lawrence, would have taxed the genius of Rachel. The maiden is now inspired by the prophetic frenzy, when the madness sent by the gods torments her, and again she is the calm, courageous victim, who has seen Troy perish, and is scarcely unwilling to die. It certainly appears that Mr. Lawrence did not mark with sufficient emphasis the distinction between these two states of mind. . . . None the less the beautiful clearness and softness of his elocution and the stately calm with which he proclaimed the splendour of honourable death, deeply moved his audience. Cassandra passed behind the veil without a backward look of regret, and presently the spectators heard the death cries of Agamemnon. . . .

. . . . It is difficult to overpraise Mr. Benson's acting of the closing scenes . . . the tall white figure, the waving arms, the face that expressed with equal skill, horror, triumph, pity (when Iphigenia was named), and fanatical conviction that right was wrong, are likely to dwell long in the memory of the audience. . . . The brief scene with Aegisthus (Mr. H. Dunn of New College) was spirited and impressive, but Clytemnestra, in the grandeur of her guilt, won the sympathy, as well as excited the horror, of spectators.

'It would be invidious to praise especially any performer when all acted so singularly well. The calls for Clytemnestra and Cassandra showed that the audience especially enjoyed their performances; but the chorus deserved a call, and the teacher of the chorus, Mr. Andrew Bradley of Balliol, cannot well be overpraised.'

Looking back after the lapse of years, it may be noted that Frank Benson, who had hitherto lived in the country, was little familiar with the theatre of the day, and the external influences on his rendering of his part did not extend much beyond the coaching he received at school in reading 'Lady Macbeth' after the manner of an older tradition. George Lawrence, on the other hand, a Londoner, had been deeply impressed by the most recent phase of English stagecraft and, as was remarked at the time, his Cassandra was strongly reminiscent of Miss Ellen Terry's Ophelia.

In her published recollections Miss Terry tells of her first meeting with F. R. Benson after a performance of the 'Agamemnon,' but by a lapse of memory unmistakably describes George Lawrence, in whose fine taste and beautiful tenor voice she doubtless found a specially sympathetic strain.

Not that Ophelia, described by Ruskin as the one weak woman in Shakespeare, can be reckoned as good a model for Cassandra as

Lady Macbeth for Clytemnestra; the pathos may be sought there but not the prophetic frenzy. As Aegisthus, the most interesting of the male parts, though a short one, H. A. C. Dunn acted with a distinct originality, and some thought better than all the rest of the company. He, like Lawrence, went to the bar, and even earlier we had to deplore his untimely death.

The last words of the 'Agamemnon,' the speech with which Clytemnestra stays the dispute between Aegisthus and the chorus, 'Heed not their idle barking,' recall what acting versions—or should I say actor-managers—are apt to treat as the end of 'Hamlet,' 'the rest is silence.' But Fortinbras is essential to the understanding of 'Hamlet,' and essential to the purpose of the 'Agamemnon' are the two plays that complete the trilogy, 'Choephoroe' and 'Eumenides.' The three together are almost exactly the length of the printed 'Hamlet'; too long for one sitting as we now reckon, so we were content to suggest the sequel and culmination of the action by a single chorus from the 'Choephoroe' as an indication of the vengeance taken on his father's murderers by Orestes.

Though all very much in earnest in our endeavour, it may be supposed that we were not left without a share of humorous incidents. Clytemnestra is a long part, and my brother was not a facile learner at best, and bearing the main weight of the management, he found five weeks, broken by at least one necessary visit to London, all too short and was by no means word perfect. So that scholars, like Mr. E. D. A. Morshead, who knew the whole play fairly by heart, having made, perhaps, the best of the translations, reported strange collocations of impossible words and metrical licences among the lapses of his memory. Often when in difficulty he would get a word in season from one or other of the chorus, some of whom had conned far more than their individual part. But once, as he stood in mid stage far from either half of the chorus, with a fine piece of by-play he appealed to the official prompter, Mr. Alfred Robinson, the Bursar of New College, sitting concealed in the hollow of the central altar, who in the excitement of the play forgot the duty of his office, and instead of a prompt only murmured in admiration 'Splendeed! Splendeed!'

'Can you do it well? Can you do it cheaply?' The Master of Balliol was no doubt fairly satisfied on the first head; as to the second, success was certainly attained, but that the exact measure of it was ever accurately ascertained must be doubted, if there is any truth in the story current at the time, that our manager

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The success, at all events, was such that we received pressing invitations from the headmasters of Winchester, Eton, and Harrow; as to the exact details of which I have no recollection, except that I find a note to the effect that on the Sunday following the two performances at Oxford, I was at Winchester measuring 'School' for the purpose of the performance on June 10. It was only when my brother interviewed the aged Warden of New College, Dr. Sewell, with a view to this tour of the schools that a belated breath of official disapproval broke the continuity of encouragement on the part of our seniors in the University, in the form of a sarcastic suggestion that we were descending to the level of strolling players.

For the tour a few changes were made in the cast: H. L. Rashdall of New College replacing Mr. Courtney as watchman, and Cecil Spring Rice, who with Clinton Dawkins had figured at Balliol as slave-girl attendants on Clytemnestra, taking Mackail's place in the chorus, while S. H. Butcher replaced Huxley, who had gone abroad. It was greatly to the credit of our carpenter, W. Shelton, that the stage and scenery were moved and fitted in rooms of very different dimensions in time for performances on three successive nights, each of which provided us with most satisfactory audiences, even the younger boys seeming to find the play worth attention. Indeed, chance has left in my hands some verses by a junior at Winchester showing an obviously sincere and remarkably deep impression of this tragedy. The tour ended on Saturday at Harrow, and on Sunday Dr. Butler, the late Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, preached a sermon dealing largely with the guilty queen; and so we went our several ways for the summer.

In the autumn three performances were arranged for at St. George's Hall in London. Some additional music was written and changes made in the chorus to improve the singing. The scenery was redesigned and reconstructed to fit the wider and more convenient stage, and repainted a sunnier tone of white, and with rather more regard to historical probabilities. The chariot of the sun-god in the pediment gave place to an archaic Apollo painted by Heywood Sumner, and though horses were still impossible, the side entrance was made wide enough to push the chariot through and give Agamemnon a chance. Some years afterwards the palace front again did duty as the Palace of Theseus in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' when given by my brother at

the Globe Theatre. Naturally the performances were in every way the better for additional rehearsal and experience in the interval, and success answered expectation.

Then youthful energy asked, what next? Was it possible to add the 'Choephoroe' and 'Eumenides' to the bill and give the complete trilogy at two sittings with an interval, a project urged at Harrow and discussed among others with yet another prospective professor of poetry, now Sir Herbert Warren, President of Magdalen. Possible, perhaps; but though an effective performance of the 'Eumenides,' memorable for the Athene of Miss Janet Case, was some years later given at Cambridge, and still later an arrangement of Mr. Morshead's English version of the whole trilogy was performed by the F. R. Benson Company, the possibility remained unrealised.

For, in truth, the call of Shakespeare had already mastered Frank Benson. St. George's Hall had brought accession of friends among Cambridge contemporaries as well as in London, among them some ladies who joined in the discussions. And so it came about that 'Romeo and Juliet' was ultimately chosen for performance, naturally enough; but why, after the triumph of 'Agamemnon,' it met with small success is worth a moment's thought. I remember a fragment of a talk with William Morris when he spoke of Shakespeare as the great obstacle to our having a tidily constructed drama in England, the form of the Elizabethan drama being so loose, that unless you could handle it almost as well as Shakespeare it was a thing of naught. As students we recognised the poetic continuity of a Shakespeare play, but did not practically realise the extent to which in the expression of dramatic unity we had been aided by the strongly defined structure of Aeschylus. To pass from one to the other was like leaving the stately simplicity of some such edifice as St. Vitale at Ravenna with its processions of stiff mosaic and rows of marble shafts and capitals, the whole plan discernible at first glance and the purpose of every detail of the structure definite and revealed, and then entering some great Gothic church, perhaps St. Ouen at Rouen, with all the mystery of shaft and rib and arch and vault and rich complexity of plan; such that, fresh from Venetian studies, even a Ruskin could fail to perceive its final fitness. We were vaguely conscious that current revivals of Shakespeare allowed most of the poetry to leak out through the cuts; while rumour told us that a different handling of Shakespeare prevailed in the court theatre of Meiningen, where the directorate recognised what actor-managers sometimes

forget, that the whole is greater than the part, and that the purpose of the play may be obscured by the obliteration of minor characters.

Later on the Meiningen company performed 'Julius Caesar' in London, the impression they produced being much enhanced by the acting of the crowd. The scenes between Mark Antony on the rostrum and the citizens below him in the forum bear a real analogy to the discussions between the actors on Agamemnon's palace steps and the chorus in the orchestra. In fact, the equivalent of a chorus persists under many disguises. Without bearing the name, for instance, in such a novel as Anthony Hope's 'Chronicles of Count Antonio,' the action culminates in as definite a massed chorus as any Handel oratorio. When it came, this performance of 'Julius Caesar' profoundly impressed my brother, and the Meiningen system took a prominent place in the theory of his art, so that it is a not unfitting coincidence that at the Shakespeare tercentenary performance he should have been knighted in the garb of Julius Caesar.

The continuous development of scenic elaboration has so altered conditions since Elizabethan days that a performance of a Shakespeare play presents more anachronisms perhaps than one of ancient Greece. The short scenes when slowed down by a physical change of scenery become breaks instead of links in the progress of the action. And yet to abandon such developments and play before a simple curtain would, after all, be the counsel rather of archaeology than of art. Tintoret, we are told, proposed to combine the drawing of Michael Angelo with the colour of Titian. Towards preserving the drawing of Shakespeare we got little further than sparing the cuts. The colouring of modern stagecraft with more than a suggestion of historical and topographical realism was an easier matter. That delightful violinist, Mr. Alfred Gibson, leading a chamber orchestra, provided us with beautiful and not too archaic music. For dress and scenery the National Gallery gave hints in plenty, and Mr. O'Connor befriended us in the execution, himself painting what remains in memory as the most beautiful of back scenes, a view of Verona all in fair clean colour. But along with the colouring came much of the modern stage to cramp the free drawing of Shakespeare, for in a regular theatre and with professional assistance we had abandoned the sling and pebble to put on armour we had not proved, and encountered the eternal difficulty of the innovator, who perforce exposes tentative efforts to be judged by the standards of assured

and accomplished professionalism. In any case it was an impossible task for one man to master a part like Romeo and at the same time to control the doings of a scratch company so as to maintain the vital thread of the play through all its complex variety of scene and action.

The 'Agamemnon' company were at least homogeneous and instinct with a sense of fellowship, and it is small wonder if, with these two experiments behind him, F. R. Benson in the near future staked his success upon the formation of a Shakespearean fellowship of actors, knit up by community of purpose, an artistic Table Round, strenuous on and off the stage. 'Midsummer Night's Dream' at the Globe and 'Richard II' at the Lyceum were yet to show how, with such an instrument, the measured balance and rhythmic culmination of a Shakespeare play may be developed before us, surcharged with added grace of music and ordered colour.

The performance of 'Romeo and Juliet' took place in July 1881. In February 1882 Dr. Gray, the Warden of Bradfield, initiated the performances there with the 'Alcestis,' in which W. L. Courtney, G. Lawrence, and F. R. Benson assisted. In November of the same year Cambridge took up the running with the 'Ajax' of Sophocles.

Thus for the time the movement rippled away from Oxford, and as they expanded the receding wavelets intersected a contrasted series centred about the personality of Arnold Toynbee, in conformity with that alternation of ethical and aesthetic impulse which, most fully developed in the writings of Ruskin, has been characteristic of the University up to the time when war brought the great break in her traditions. How will the current set when the flood of life returns to those halls which pious founders endowed with delights of music and the arts? Will they re-echo the cry, revived it seems but yesterday, 'This might have been sold for two hundred pence and given to the poor'? Should they not rather in times when tendencies in art travel towards disintegration, while rigid formalism is urged in the name of utilitarian science, continue to be the home of that flexible idealism which, underlying a certain mannerism of diffidence, sums up the educational message drawn by Oxford from the form and spirit of the masterpieces of past time?

W. A. S. BENSON.

MEMORIES OF A MARINE.

BY MAJOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE ASTON, K.C.B.

I. UP THE STRAITS IN THE EIGHTIES.

WHEN the powers that be invited me to conduct a course of instruction at the Army Staff College with the idea of bringing the services closer together by teaching them something of each other's ways (on the principle *tout savoir, tout pardonner*), I ventured to make a beginning by writing up in chalk on the blackboard of my lecture-hall the sentences :

‘What boat are you on?’

‘Is it a big one?’

Then I asked the assembled staff officers in embryo to point to three glaring faults in the questions, if applied to anyone of the R.N. I hope that my old shipmates in that service will forgive me for the shudder of discomfort which I know will pass down their spines at seeing such enormities in print. The days have passed away since shore going folk thought that, because the leviathans of the Mercantile Marine are familiarly called ‘boats’ by their passengers, the term is equally applicable to his Majesty’s ‘ships.’ Many years have passed since the soldier’s wife in one of the old Indian troopships, manned by the Royal Navy, asked the captain : ‘Do you think you will ever get a P. and O., Captain?’ The story, which was new in the eighties, has now passed into a tradition. Maybe the brotherhood in arms of the R.N. and the Merchant Service in the great war may lead to the adoption of a common language, containing fewer pitfalls for the unwary.

We will take the second question next. We all know the habit of the male of applying the feminine gender to anything for which he has an intimate affection ; whether it be aeroplane, motor-car, engine, or any other ‘inanimate’ object with life in it, if I may be permitted such a discrepancy, above all, to describe a ship throbbing with life, and possessing an individuality appreciated best by those who are responsible for handling her. I cannot help quoting here from the naval poet ‘Klaxon’ the following stanza, with the glorious throb of young life in it, written when he transfers to the air machine the feeling of oneness with himself felt by the executive naval officer towards everything which floats

under him, from the early days when his face was first washed with salt water.

'The way of a brand-new aeroplane
On a frosty winter morn.'

'The sun on the fields a mile below is glinting off the grass
That slides along like a rolling map as under the clouds I pass.
The early shadows of byre and hedge are dwindling dark below
As up the stair of the morning air on my idle wheels I go,—
Nothing to do but to let her alone—she's flying herself to-day,
Unless I chuck her about a bit—there isn't a bump or sway.
So *there's* a bank at ninety-five—there's a spin and a spiral dive,
And here we are again.

And *that's* a roll and twist around, and that's the sky and there's
the ground,

And I and the aeroplane
Are doing a glide, but upside-down, and that's a village, and that's
a town—

And now we're rolling back.
And *this* is the way we climb and stall, and sit up and beg on
nothing at all,

The wires and strainers slack.
And now we'll try and be good some more, and open the throttle
and hear her roar,

And steer for London Town.
For there never a pilot yet was born who flew a machine on a frosty
morn

But started stunting soon.
To feel if his wires were really there,
Or whether he flew on ice or air,
Or whether his hands were gloved or bare,
Or he sat in a free balloon.'

Note the 'she' and the 'her.' Try to substitute 'it' and 'its,'
and see what a hash you make of the whole verse. But there
we have the life all in the man. Now turn to his verse about his
ship, for true intimacy and the dual life that is all one. We find
the ship given her own individuality, responding to his in a close
partnership, and holding converse with him. Here is the verse:

'The way of a ship at a racing speed
In a bit of a rising gale.'

'The power and drive beneath me now are above the power of kings.
It's mine the word that lets her loose and in my ear she sings—

"Mark now the way I sport and play with the rising hunted sea,
Across my grain in cold disdain their ranks are hurled at me.
But down my wake is a foam-white lake, the remnant of their line,
That broke and died beneath my pride—your foeman, man, and
mine."

The perfect tapered hull below is a dream of line and curve,
An artist's vision in steel and bronze for the gods and men to serve.
If ever a statue came to life, you quivering slender thing,
It ought to be you—my racing girl—as the Amazon song you sing."

This is the modern spirit, with its inspiration of great speed. In the eighties of the last century, movement was more leisurely, but they were days of desperate bodily activity for the seamen, for instance, for the upper-yardmen who formed a link between the men of the Nelson wars, and those, with the same spirit, who have just secured the true freedom of sea and land for all nations whose occasions are lawful. In the days of Nelson the seamen, by strenuous efforts, increased the speed and handiness in manœuvre of the vessels they manned. In the days when heavy ironclads had masts and yards, the efforts of the seamen might result in a fleet speed of perhaps six knots with a favourable wind, and very little chance of ever reaching a destination situated to windward.

If this meets the eye of any old shipmate who has read the sentences I wrote on the Staff College blackboard, he will be asking the question—'Has he forgotten? And after only about fifteen years ashore?' The answer is, 'No—the biggest mistake has been left to the last. It was that word *on* which sent the worst of the shivers down your spine!' How can one explain it to anyone without the feeling? It seems so inadequate to write that the seaman thinks of the deck as the roof of his dwelling place, while the landsman thinks of it as a floor. Landsmen live *in* houses, not *on* them. Seamen live *in* ships. How often, even nowadays, we hear such questions put to a man in the navy as 'What ship are you on now?' or 'On what ship were you serving when I met you at Malta?' He is polite to the inquirer, of course, but if you listen carefully you will notice that he answers—'Oh, I'm in the *Ramillies* now,' or 'I think I must have been in the *Alexandra* in those days,' with just the least possible stress put on the word *in*. The difference between the '*in*' and the '*on*' shows the whole difference between the mental aspect of the man to whom a ship is a home, of which the deck represents the roof,

and that of a visitor who gains his impressions by walking about on that roof.

To the members of her ship's company, one of his Majesty's ships is a dwelling place, a home peopled with all sorts and conditions of men who have one deep sentiment in common, a love of the service coupled with a determination that H.M.S. ———, whatever her name may be, shall be a credit to the traditions of that service. It can only be compared with the deep feeling felt for the 'shore-going' home in which one was born and bred. To ask a seaman or marine what ship he is serving 'on' is like asking someone brought up in a happy home what house he lived 'on' when he was young. To the seaman—and in the word seaman I should like to include nowadays all 'ranks and ratings'—officers, seamen, stokers, artificers, marines, whoever they may be—the ship is first and foremost a home *in* which he lives, a home at its best in blue water. The shores and ports he visits are to him like a moving panorama passing before the windows of his house. The home feeling takes time to develop, as it does on shore, and it can best be acquired in one's youth. Marine officers in my day used to go to sea rather late in life, some never went to a sea-going ship at all until they were majors, and as a result it must be confessed that there was much discontent, amounting in some cases to a violent hatred of service at sea, freely expressed in forcible terms. I had the good luck myself to be sent at the age of twenty-one to what was then looked upon as *the* seagoing ship in the service, the flagship of the Mediterranean Fleet, and I joined her in Malta harbour in January 1883, six months after the bombardment of Alexandria.

Some incidents in the lives of those who go down to the sea in ships stand out in their memory for all time, and joining the first man-of-war to be one's home for a commission is one of them. The life of a marine officer at sea thirty-five years ago was a life of idleness, and this contributed a good deal to the discontent felt by many of them. I can remember at least seven cases of men who were my contemporaries, some of them excellent officers, going to pieces from sheer want of work and of mental interest. They took to drink, gambled, went off their heads, and, in three of the cases, committed suicide. The policy of the Admiralty in those days is, and was then, beyond my comprehension. In the branch of the R.M. forces to which I belonged we were put through tremendously stiff courses in mathematics, in science,

and in gunnery and torpedo work, in addition to a splendid course of training in discipline and in military subjects, as far as they can be learned academically and by 'drill.' These courses lasted nearly four years, at a cost to the country which must have amounted to well over £1000, and then we were sent to sea to do—nothing. The old naval proverb used to run—'Who has the least to do in a ship?' and the answer was 'You might think it was the parson, but it isn't, it is the major of marines. The parson has nothing to do; the major has nothing to do, and two subalterns to help him to do it.'

As one of the subalterns, my duties were to be on deck for 'divisions,' to fall in, inspect the men, hear prayers read, and then, unless I was on duty, to do nothing all day excepting on Friday mornings when we went to general quarters, and drilled at the guns. Sometimes we were landed on some other morning for infantry drill—I am slipping into shore-going language, I mean 'forenoon,' the 'morning' on board his Majesty's ships is over at 8 A.M.—and on Sundays we inspected the men and then attended divine service on the quarter-deck. We were on duty on alternate days, and duty meant being buttoned up tightly in a full dress tunic with belts, sword and helmet, from 9 A.M. until sunset, inspecting the reliefs of sentries every watch, and going round the sentry-posts occasionally by day and by night. If a flag officer came on board, or passed the ship with his flag flying, we turned up with the guard and presented arms. These, as far as I can remember, were the whole of my duties while I was on board H.M.S. *Alexandra* for the first three years of my service afloat. As a result very little memory of the monotonous round of duties at sea has lasted. But the memory of the many happy times and of service friendships remains, also a vivid remembrance of a Soudan campaign.

The *Alexandra* in her third commission as flagship of the Mediterranean Fleet was first and foremost what is recognised in the service by the expression a 'happy' ship. Our captain was the late 'Harry' Rawson, and his face and personality would suffice to make all round him happy under almost any conditions. I believe that a few years afterwards, when he was Commander-in-Chief on the Cape station, he did wonders in that way during a strenuous and thirsty march with a naval expeditionary force from the coast to the city of Benin. He afterwards was a very popular Governor in Australia, and the hero of the story of the

admiral who reported, on giving up his post, to a Secretary of State, and was received with the remark: 'Really, Admiral, all the colonies will be wanting admirals if they are so popular, and what shall we do then with our professional governors?' The commander was the late Charles Campbell. Both were too exalted in rank to come within the sphere of intimate friendship of a young marine. Gaps in rank have to be kept wider at sea than on land, because of being constantly thrown together, and this had been impressed on me by a story told me, probably with intent, by an old lieutenant in the navy when I was a youngster at Greenwich. Subalterns in the army are brought up to salute their commanding officers, with an affable smile, and say 'Good morning, sir!' when they first meet them, and the same practice is followed at the headquarters of the R.M. forces. Once upon a time a young subaltern went to sea for the first time, and going on deck the first morning ('forenoon' I should have said), spied the captain walking up and down with his hands behind him. The captain was walking on the weather side of the deck, reserved by naval tradition for his use. The youth crossed over, walked up to the captain, smiled nicely, saluted, and said 'Good morning, sir!' To which the reply was 'Eh?' Question repeated without smile. 'Eh?' Question again repeated, rather tremulously this time. 'Is that all? Get over your own side of the deck.' I can't imagine many captains in my time being quite so brutal, but I think the story is founded on fact.

The first thing taught to the young in the Senior Service is the lesson of the unimportance of the individual, as an individual, and his importance as a part, however small, in a great human assembly, if he resigns himself to that great unwritten law, the Custom of the Service. Sooner or later he will rise to the occasion and grasp the Law of the Navy—'On the strength of one link in the cable, dependeth the might of the chain. Who knows when thou mayest be tested? So live that thou bearest the strain.' Only the links of a cable between the hawse-pipe and the water show in the daylight, the rest must be content with obscurity. But to get on with the story.

The thoughts of most who served up the Straits in the eighties centre a good deal round Malta. Excepting during the summer cruises, the flagship spent most of the year there, tied up to No. 3 buoy. Malta was, and I believe still is, a great place for making life-long friendships. It would also in those days have been an

admirable place for seamen and soldiers to have mixed and got to know more about each other's ways and work, but the seamen then kept up another Nelson tradition. They looked upon themselves as a race apart, spoke a different language from the 'shore-going loafer,' and maintained an attitude of patronising contempt towards soldiers, while not objecting to chum up with the men of certain regiments, as individuals. Soldiers as a class were 'grabbies' or 'leather-necks.' The barrack-square trained soldier of the pipe-clay era showed a want of resource under unfamiliar conditions in landing operations, and few seamen realised his marching powers, or the qualities which had given world fame to the 'thin red line.' The employment of the navy on transport work, especially the Indian troopships, helped to keep up the silly misunderstandings between the fighting services. Many of the naval officers of these troopships were disappointed men who had missed promotion, and many of the army officers they carried were very young ones, whose dignity outran their experience, a fatal fault in the eyes of a seaman. There was constant friction, and the old Indian white transports which used to tie up near the flagship's buoy, and were such a feature of the Grand Harbour of Malta in those times, did much harm in keeping up the traditional friction, so constantly referred to by historians of British wars in past centuries. The Indian troopships went by the name of 'Lobster Pots' in the Naval Service.

Malta was looked upon generally with affection in the fleet as a tie with the feminine side of home life. Wives and sisters and friends came out for the winter season. 'Their Lordships' of those days wisely objected to visits to the Admiralty by serving officers anxious to obtain or to change appointments. Leave might be granted to those serving on foreign stations, only on one condition, rigidly enforced, that the applicant promised not to go to England. The result was good from the point of view of the country. There was little diversion of energy from the service, or from the home life of the ship. So we started our family life in the ward-room of the *Alexandra* in January 1883, with the prospect of making her our home for three years. I missed the first three months or so, being laid up all alone in a big infectious ward, containing 70 beds, in the R.N. hospital at Bighi—scarlet fever, caught in the Carnival crowd in the streets of Valetta. I remember having visited the sweet-shop called the 'Sick Man,' where the most rich and fascinating forms of nougat were

sold, and finding to my horror that the disease was diagnosed on my hospital report as 'surfeit of confectionery.' The story got about and earned me the nickname of Chilo, which stuck to me for the commission, and for many years afterwards. I escaped from quarantine just in time for a cruise round the Adriatic. Impressions of that cruise and those of following years have only left dim memories of slow movement through summer seas, and a constantly changing panorama of coast-lines and places visited. Seeing the world from a home in one of her Majesty's ships in those days was a form of travel unlike all others. Impressions of beautiful scenery remain, but few impressions of foreign peoples. The pose of the seaman was to recognise the national individuality of Frenchmen only. All other foreigners were described collectively as 'Portuguese.' We have travelled quite a long way in our knowledge since then. I should not be surprised to find that even in England quite a large proportion of the important folk who use, in democratic parlance, the phrase 'self-determination on the basis of nationality,' and perhaps as many as five per cent. amongst their audiences, even know the difference now between a Czecho-Slovak and a Jugo-Slav. A few incidents of the cruises stand out; impressions of the beauty of the Dalmatian coast, where Jugo-Slavs are to be found, and the hospitality and friendliness of the inhabitants of the various nationalities. Either at Pola or Fiume, an enormous laurel wreath came off, in a shoreboat, with long white silk streamers inscribed 'To the Lord Hay, and the crews of the *Alexandra* and *Temeraire*, heroes of the bombardment of Alexandria!' The senders did not realise that we had few such heroes on board, because our ship had recommissioned, but they meant it kindly. The good feeling of the coastal population towards the British Navy could not have been only on the surface. It was still there thirty years later, and survived the great war. When a British destroyer put into Fiume harbour during the Armistice days (November 1918) she was greeted by cheering crowds, denser and even more enthusiastic than those who greeted us during the summer cruises in the eighties. I have a vivid memory of one afternoon when we were greeted wherever we went by the sound of our National Anthem, and we had to keep our hats off for nearly four hours. It is a strange world, in which people with a sincere mutual regard are constrained to slaughter each other in pursuit of an ideal or of plunder, or at the bidding of some polysyllabic phrase with an obscure meaning.

After the Adriatic cruise, and a week or two at Malta to refit,

came an autumn cruise in the Aegean, with views of the beautiful outlines of the Greek islands, glorious sunsets and atmospheric effects. A visit to Smyrna, with a first experience of the sights, sounds, and smells of the East. Strings of laden camels padding their way through narrow streets. Bazaars, where the purchase of a towel was an exciting game lasting three days, instead of a commercial transaction lasting three minutes. An impression that we had stepped into a former century, when we heard that only a day or two before a band of brigands had carried off two boys, and, when the father could not pay the ransom demanded (£200), but only £100, they had sent back one of his sons, killing the other. Then to many places of which the names had been familiar at a classical school, left only a few years before. At Athens I remember my surprise at seeing shop signs and notices, written up in Greek characters. The impression conveyed to my mind at a public school had been that the Greeks, if they ever existed at all, lived in quite a different world, where their descendants no longer exist. A trip from Argos to the ruins at Mycenae produced the impression that perhaps, after all, the Greek language was not invented purely for the annoyance of public school boys.

After the Levant cruise we returned to Malta and settled down there for the winter, gave a children's party at Christmas, at which we had a Punch and Judy show made entirely on board, and followed it up by a weekly afternoon dance. At one of those dances, news arrived of the disaster to Baker Pasha's army of Egyptians in the Soudan; it was said that the Egyptian garrison of a desert post at Tokar was in danger, that even Suakin itself might soon be threatened, and the marines of the Mediterranean Fleet were to be sent at once to join an army from Egypt to deal with the emergency.

That was a sudden plunge from social frivolities into a great experience. I pass over the few hours of blank disappointment when we heard that, though all the men excepting those employed as officers' servants were to go, and the seamen were to do the guard duties usually performed by marines, many of the officers were to remain behind in their ships. I was amongst the chosen few who left in the *Hecla* for Port Said at daybreak next morning or soon after. Captain A. K. Wilson (now Admiral of the Fleet Sir A. K. Wilson, V.C., G.C.B.) was her captain. We gathered that he meant to be in it somehow when he said good-bye to us at Port Said, where we were transferred to the *Orontes*, a naval

transport. The *Hecla's* first orders were not to pass Port Said. We next saw her in the Red Sea, with camels on her deck, towing a string of large floating water tanks, and I next saw Captain Wilson, as he then was, walking across the desert with his coxswain towards the sound of the guns of the battle of El Teb, where he won his well-earned V.C.

After picking her way through coral reefs, showing clearly near the surface, the *Orontes* anchored off a featureless shore at Trinkitat. It was the place where the surviving remnants of Baker's army had embarked not many days before, and a few traces of their recent presence were to be seen when we landed to look round. The chief feature of the landscape was a dead camel, with a few vultures round it, and beyond that a wide expanse of desert sand ending in quivering mirage, looking to the uninitiated like lakes in which overhanging trees were reflected.

That particular camel figured in our first experience of a regrettable incident, one of those minor ones that happen so often in all wars, but are seldom reported. At sunset, about two companies of one of the best battalions in the army were landed to guard the piers which had been made by us during the day to be used for landing stores. There is no twilight in those parts, and darkness came when only a few of the men had landed. They were in a land of mystery, of which they had no daylight knowledge. They put out the usual line of outpost sentries. At about 1.30 A.M. we heard from our transport the sound of heavy firing on shore. For about half an hour we thought that a battle was raging. We heard after sunrise what had really happened. One of the sentries caught sight of the dead camel, which seemed to be creeping up to him. He could stand the strain no longer and opened fire. The picket ran to support him and did the same, and nearly the whole force followed their example. It was the first night experience of the sort, but we had many more afterwards, with greater or less reason.

During the days following, the expeditionary force was landed, including our battalion, which had been reinforced at Port Said by some Royal Marines who were on their way home after many years' service on the China station, chiefly in small gunboats. We mustered about 700 in all, with only six officers instead of about four times the number, so life was fairly strenuous for the six. A few more joined later, including Colonel Tuson, who came out from England to command us, bringing Captain Poë as adjutant. The truth is that we were rather helpless in looking out for our

own comfort. Our military training had been carried out on a barrack square, or the similar parade-ground at Corradino, overlooking the Grand Harbour at Malta. We were dressed in tight blue uniform, with heavy uncomfortable helmets of a foolish shape, pressing on the temples, and giving no shelter to vital spots from the sun. We had always worn thin Wellington boots with our uniform, and had been obliged to fall back on the stiff leather 'ammunition boots,' commonly called 'Pusser's crabs,' which we managed to draw in our ships. Our feet were unaccustomed to them, and few of us had learned the trick of soaping socks to avoid sore feet. The men wore heavy buff leather (pipeclayed) equipment with stiff shiny black pouches to carry their ammunition. They could only open the covers of the pouches with great difficulty when lying down to fire, and much of the ammunition fell out when they got up. The haversacks were made of thin linen, easily worn through by their contents, and, worst of all, the water-bottles were small wooden ones of inferior design, with a very small hole for filling—and that in a thirsty desert. The water had, of course, to be supplied from condensing ships, and was pumped through pipes to canvas tanks on shore, where it evaporated rapidly. It was generally warm, and had a flat and rather oily taste. We had no transport, but a few water-carts and ammunition mules were lent us by the army. The general impression of those Tokar operations, working from Trinkitat as a base, is an impression of thirst. Two pints of water per head per day when we went into the desert, marching in square and so getting the full benefit of the dust raised, and sometimes the stage of thirst was reached when the tongue swells and seems to close up your throat, and then cracks and bleeds. The two pints, allowing for spilling and evaporation, were nearly all used up in cooking and the making of tea or cocoa. Washing was not as a rule possible. About that, more anon.

The Tokar campaign, which resulted in the battle of El Teb, followed the line of all desert campaigns before the invention of aeroplanes and motor-cars. You could not possibly carry with your force all the water, supplies, and ammunition required for protracted operations. That would be a physical impossibility. So you sent what you wanted on ahead with as small as possible an escort to defend it. If the escort was too large it would consume the supplies before the main body came up. If too small, the enemy would probably get the supplies. When you had established big enough depôts on ahead, the force was sent forward, in the

hope of bringing off a decisive battle. Our object in February 1884 was the relief of the Egyptian garrison at Tokar. The march was too long for one day but could be done in two, so we formed one forward dépôt, at a place we called Fort Baker, where Baker's force had made some fortifications. I was given charge of some Krupp guns to be mounted in the fort, and took one of them forward. No less than 80 men were needed to drag it through a sort of salt marsh that lay between Trinkitat and Fort Baker, but we got it there somehow.

Near Fort Baker I came across my first—and worst—experience of war. Old battlefields are a feature of the Soudan desert, but they are generally indicated by clean skulls and bones lying about in the sand. This one was not many days old. Clouds of vultures flying up a short distance, and resettling amongst others, too gorged to move, were the first indication. Then a line of corpses all lying on their faces, speared in the back, and for the most part transfixed with wooden stakes, the line leading from great heaps of men and transport animals, the remnants of Baker's force which had failed to stand in square when charged by large masses of Hadendowa Arabs. It was not an object for close investigation. When the heat mirage cleared, some of the enemy showed occasionally amongst the thorn bushes in the distance, one fine-looking Arab, on a white horse, waving defiance. They were just within gun range, and a few rounds dispersed them.

Soon the whole force arrived, under the command of Sir Gerald Graham, and after spending one night in bivouac outside Fort Baker they marched forward at daybreak on February 29 to fight the battle of El Teb. It was my lot to watch that battle, or as much of it as could be seen in the mirage, through a telescope. The co-operation of my guns might have been required if everything had not gone as well as was expected. The cavalry and mounted infantry led the way, and amongst the former, the 10th Hussars were conspicuous—the officers in khaki tunics, gold-laced riding-breeches, gold and silver belts, and helmets with tall brass spikes and chains. The regiment, on its way home from India without horses, was taken out of transports and mounted on small Egyptian horses. Amongst the subalterns, I remember Julian Byng—the Commander of the celebrated Third Army on the Western front in 1917–18. My knowledge of the battle of El Teb is only second-hand, so I will not try to describe it. One incident may be worth repeating.

The enemy unexpectedly opened fire upon our force with field-

guns. It fell to the lot of our battalion to take these guns. Colonel Burnaby, of 'Ride to Khiva' fame, had been in front of our men, using a shot-gun loaded with slugs, during the advance. He was amongst the first to reach the guns, and was sitting on one of them examining his bare arm when our senior major came up. Burnaby called to him, 'Look at that arm!' Not noticing a hole in it, which Burnaby was disposed to attribute to a Martini bullet fired by one of our men, the major answered—'Very fine arm, sir!'

The wounded, with Baker Paska and Burnaby, began to arrive at Fort Baker in the evening, with an escort of 10th Hussars. We heard the story of the charge by the 10th and 19th Hussars, and the difficulty in reaching the enemy, whose tactics were to lie flat on the ground and slash at the horses with knives as they passed. 'Monty' Slade in the 10th was killed, his horse being brought down in that way. Sword-cuts did little damage to the shields, made of thick hide, which the Arabs held in the left hand. I have one of these shields as an example with the shallow mark of a cut on it, and heard of several picked up with revolver bullets lodged in them. In the evening of that day I remember an incident that may help to give an idea of life without water. One of our men brought me a message to say that the R.E. corporal had secured some washing water, and 'Would we like to have some?' Soon after he brought over a small bit of looking glass, and a tiny basin of thick liquid looking like pea soup. This made shaving possible, at all events, but before I could finish my corporal came up and saluted. 'Beg pardon, sir, but the men say would you please not splash the water, as they would like to have a rub at it.' When about six of them had used it, a message came from the R.E. to ask if we had finished with their water yet!

Tokar was relieved the next day, and our battalion came back to Fort Baker. On the day following we marched to Trinkitat, and embarked in the *Humber* for Suakin. The *Humber* was provided with a bathroom. Some people say 'Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed.' I think they are wrong. I can only say that I enjoyed over and over again in the desert the idea of sitting in a warm bath holding a compound containing a pint of champagne, two bottles of soda water, with a bit of ice tinkling against the glass. That ambition was fulfilled by some of us in the *Humber* before we arrived at Suakin for the advance on Tamaai.

(To be continued.)

*LORD BYRON AND DR. MILLINGEN.**AN EDITORIAL NOTE.*

THE Editor has received from Mr. J. R. van Millingen a detailed reply to the article by Lord Eversley on 'Lord Byron and Dr. Millingen' which appeared in the November number of the CORNHILL. He does not propose to publish it, but will remark that Mr. Van Millingen lays emphasis on the fact that the volume 'Sin and its Victim,' frequently quoted in the article, was written by a reprobate son of the late doctor in order to blackmail his father.

Lord Eversley on his part desires to make one correction of his article. He withdraws the statement that Dr. Millingen divorced his second wife, a statement made on the authority of a friend at Constantinople in 1878, whom he thought reliable. But as Mr. J. R. van Millingen assures him that there is no foundation for it, he expresses regret that it has given pain to the descendants of that lady.

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